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The Role of the Archivist in Performing Arts Documentation:

Theory and Practice

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The Role of the Archivist in Performing Arts Documentation:

Theory and Practice

by

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The Role of the Archivist in Performing Arts Documentation:

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Faced with the ephemeral nature of the art of performance, performing arts archivists must decide whether it is appropriate for them to intervene to ensure the creation of documents, what documents should be created, and how they should be created. In order to adequately answer these questions, archival theory, with its traditional focus on objectivity and non-interference, must meet with theories of documentation from performance and theatre studies, which question the possibility of adequately capturing or saving performance given the subjective and perspective nature of both the work and documents arising from it. This study addresses these questions both theoretically and practically through a survey of performing artists and a case study observing an archivist interacting with a performing arts community to facilitate the preservation of its work. The artists surveyed in this study demonstrated both an interest in improved documentation of their own work and an understanding of the limits of documentation. The archivist in the case study, after experimenting with various levels of involvement in the creation of documentation, concluded that the best approach would be a focus on building connections between the archival and performing arts communities, providing artists with the education and support they need to document themselves, and giving them secure homes for the documents they choose to create.

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1. The Problem

Live performance often disrupts the normal course of life. Although it happens in time, performance is a compaction of time. Emotions and events that would normally be scattered and without pattern are stuck together in one place and one moment, making connections, clarifying the human experience they represent. Performance intensifies everything. It only makes sense, then, that performance would also intensify many of the problems at the heart of the archival project.

Archives of all kinds must face the ephemerality of the events they document and the mortality of the people they memorialize. In performing arts archives, however, ephemerality is especially poignant and problematic, and the traces are particularly fragile. Other art forms have a presence in the physical world, often at least intended to be stable and fixed, but the disappearance of performance is part of its essence. Other kinds of "events," on the other hand, are not conceived as art works, and do not need to be preserved as unified intentional creations in the same way that performance does.

Archives have traditionally privileged documents that are made naturally as a part of the necessary workings of an organization or as a direct result of an event. Performance does not always produce these kinds of documents. Because of how easily performance disappears from memory, adequate documentation of performance often requires the intentional creation of documents—videos or photographs or written descriptions—that preserve some of the essence of the

artistic work. This possibility of intentional creation (with the accompanying issue of whose job it might be to create such documentation) does not mesh with traditional archival ideas about what constitutes a record and how appraisal should occur.

If the document does not come into existence naturally, if the archivist were to participate in the creation of the document so as to ensure its existence, it would not be "archival" in the traditional sense of the word, not in the sense that a series of correspondence from the office of the president of a corporation is archival. Although the definition of records has changed in recent years, and archivists' perception of their role has broadened, most archivists still shy away from the outright creation of documents and records of events. It is this reticence that makes it so hard for the archival community to engage in the documentation of performing arts. The tension between the fragile nature of performance (and the perceived lack of incentive on the part of many performers and performing arts organizations to document their own work) on one hand and the perceived limits of the archival mission on the other leaves many performances lost and irrecoverable.

There are many different kinds of performing arts archives, created for various purposes. Some (perhaps most) exist for the purpose of furthering historical research in the field. Others act as repositories for particular companies or artistic organizations, and exist to serve the varied kinds of design and dramaturgical research required there. Still others collect performing arts material following their mandate to preserve the culture of a particular city or region. All of these must deal

with the challenges of assembling the remnants of this art form which, as critic Peggy Phelan famously said, "becomes itself through disappearance."[1] In all of these kinds of performing arts archives, archivists must ask the question: Should an archivist take the responsibility on himself to create documentation of performance? If so, what should be documented, and how? These questions have two sides: problems of theory and problems of practice.

On the theory side, both the performance and theatre studies community and the archival community weigh in on issues surrounding performing arts documentation. The voices coming from these two communities seem to be at odds with each other. The archival paradigms are largely based on "history" and "fact" and "evidence," while performance and theatre scholars are pre-occupied with "experience" and "memory." The archivist most naturally approaches performance as a historical event, while the performance scholar most naturally approaches it as an artistic work. While archivists are concerned with preservation and accurate representation, performance scholars talk about an aesthetic of disappearance. In the midst of these contradictions, the archivist must draw on both of these bodies of theory in order to wisely answer the question of how much involvement she should have in the creation of documents of performance.

On the practice side, the archivist must be able to develop a specific plan of action based on her own community's needs, capabilities, and constraints. One missing (or minimal) element in the literature is the artist's voice; what do artists

[1] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146.

themselves desire for the documentation of their work? How might those desires work themselves out in a real-life interaction with an archivist? Other practical questions involve the archivist's activities. Is it appropriate or desirable to make video recordings? What is the particular skill set a performing arts archivist would have to develop in order to more actively capture performance and performing communities?

This study attempts to address these problems of the archivist's involvement in documentation of performing arts from both angles (theory and practice). Drawing on both archival and performance and theatre studies literature, the literature review will place these two bodies of conversation and the similarities and differences between the two discourses in clearer focus. The study itself addresses problems associated with practice. A survey of the opinions of performing arts artists concerning their attitudes and practices tests the assumption that performers do not adequately document their own work and explores their attitudes toward documentation. A related case study explores one archivist's experience working closely with artists to create documents of their work, and includes her reflections on her role and the outcomes of her documentation project. The results of both the survey and the case study move us toward an understanding of the archivist's role in performance documentation as one of collaboration with the artist, of support and education, and, ultimately, artistic in its own right.

2. Literature Review

A broad range of academic conversations contribute to an understanding of performing arts documentation. I begin by reviewing Derrida's *Mal de Archive*, a starting place for thinking about the connection between archives and memory. From there, I will highlight some of the classic works on archival appraisal, discussing how the ideas of several key theorists do or do not facilitate the preservation of live performance. This will by no means be a comprehensive survey of the literature on archival appraisal, but will focus on works particularly relevant to the theoretical issues involved in documentation, and performing arts documentation in particular. After a survey of the relevant archival theory, I will discuss the body of theory concerning documentation that springs from the performance and theatre studies communities. From theory I will move to practice, exploring the experiences of practitioners of performance documentation. Finally, I will explore several helpful ideas coming from conservation and museum studies as these disciplines seek to preserve an ever-broader range of art forms.

Jacques Derrida's *Mal de Archive* has become a touchstone of the archival community in recent years, a way of understanding the archival project that resonates in contemporary thought both inside and outside information studies. Throughout this treatise, Derrida emphasizes the fluidity of the archive as well as its inherently creative character. The archive as a historical record is never closed,

according to Derrida, but "opens out of the future."[2] The records of the past that exist in the archive are not static and fixed, but rather are always changing in their relation to the present and the future. Even more pertinent to the study of performing arts archives is his assertion that "the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event."[3] Here we see one of the great concerns of performing arts documentation—how can a document be a means of preserving an artistic work if the document itself is a created thing, a production in and of itself, a separate created work? In order to understand the radical nature of Derrida's concept of the archive as open and inherently creative, we must place him in the context of the flow of classic archival theory, considering how performing arts documentation fits into traditional theories of appraisal.

Suzanne Briet was an early theorist in information science (although not archival theory *per se*). In the slim but powerful manifesto *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* she famously defined a document with the antelope illustration; an antelope in the wild is not a document while an antelope in a zoo, catalogued and written about, is a document[4]. In a performing arts context, we might be able to apply Briet's ideas by saying that performance "in the wild" is not a document, not

[2] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 67-68.
[33] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 17.
[4] Suzanne Briet, *What is Documentation?*, trans. Ronald E. Day and Laurent Martinet (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006), 10-11.

having been introduced into a system of knowledge, not having been "catalogued" or indexed, but performance recorded on a tape, described in a review, or photographed becomes a document. The tape, photograph, or written description introduces the performance into the documentary universe. From this perspective, performing arts documentation takes on the same kind of usefulness as the antelope in the zoo. Antelopes may not appear naturally in zoos, but their presence there teaches both the general public and scholars a little about antelopes as they are in the wild. The picture we get of antelopes from their behavior in zoos does not give us the same rich understanding we would get from antelopes in the wild, but helps us to understand something about their appearance and behavior. Performing arts documentation works much the same way, not replacing live performance but giving us a link to it, a way to access it intellectually and understand it better when we could not experience it in its original environment.

Sir Hilary Jenkinson anchored much of the dialogue about archival appraisal through the 20th century. His ideas are a useful starting point because of their clarity and focus; they are the purest expression of the ideal of non-interference, of unbroken custody, and of the value of archives as an objective record of a historical event. According to Jenkinson, archivists should not be involved in the generation or appraisal of documents directly, and even the creating agency responsible for appraisal should "refrain from thinking of itself as a body producing historical

evidences."[5] To do so would be to change the phenomenon by studying it (or by making it a thing to be studied). He does, however, support the involvement of archivists with document creators in such ways as advising them concerning what materials they should use for documents they wish to preserve.[6] In a Jenkinsonian framework, the performing arts archivist would most certainly not create documents of performances, and would not even give guidance to artists about what documents they should create.

Post-World War II theorist Hans Booms saw the place of the archivist somewhat differently than Jenkinson did. For Booms, the archivist's job is partly to capture the essence of the time in which he lives. In an article originally published in 1972, Booms claimed that the archivist often make their decisions using "fingerspitzengefuhl," or subtle intuition, even when they do not admit it.[7] Good documentation, for Booms, requires sensitivity and maturity on the part of the archivist, and a sense of historical context. While Booms, like Jenkinson, is writing in a very different context from ours, the useful idea from this discussion is that archival value can be a matter of intuition and "sense" of the historical situation on the part of the archivist, not just the creators of the documents. This idea transfers easily into documentation of all types of art, because it involves acknowledgement that the archivist must place herself inside the experience of the work (in the same

[5] Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration*, 2nd, reprint ed. (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co. Ltd, 1965), 150.
[6] Ibid, 160.
[7] Hans Booms, "Society and the Formation of a Documentary Heritage: Issues in the Appraisal of Archival Sources," *Archivaria* 24 (Summer 1987): 85.

way that Booms encouraged cultural or historical immersion) in order to know what is important about it and to capture it adequately.

Helen Willa Samuels' work on documentation strategy and functional analysis gives us a way of thinking holistically about documenting an area of culture such as performing arts. In *Varsity Letters*, she discusses the need for archivists to understand the core functions of an institution, what branches of the institution perform what functions, and what documents best capture each function. Only after all of this work has been done can the archivist capture a representative range of documents. One of the most critical functions of the performing arts organizations must be the creation of artistic works. Acknowledging this as a function, the performing arts archivist attempting to appraise using Samuels' functional analysis method should seek out documents that capture the artistic work, not merely the administrative aspects of the organization. Samuels also encourages close partnership between the archivist and the community of interest, so that the archivist can advise the community and ensure the creation of potentially significant documents. In her article "Improving our Disposition," Samuels even opens the discussion of what it might mean for the archivist to actively create documents, observing that "while many human endeavours produce records as a natural by-product, other activities leave no tangible evidence."[8] She then acknowledges that such techniques as photography and oral history are sometimes used by archivists, but says that archivists have not yet "systematically included the analysis of [the

[8] Helen W. Samuels, "Improving Our Disposition: Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991): 134.

deficiencies of modern records] among their tasks, nor initiated activities to fill these gaps."[9] Samuels is laying the foundation here for a more robust discussion of the archivist as a creator of documents.

In their article "Theoretical Discussions on Digital Representations of Performance," Daisy Abbot et al. discuss how archival appraisal theory intersects with representations of performance. They suggest that "if performance archives are to respond to [current concerns] then perhaps the traditional notion of a record as a fixed, authoritative representation of an event should be expanded."[10] They point out that, because a performance is rehearsed and re-presented multiple times, even our simple dichotomy of performance-as-event versus performance-as-art becomes confused, because each performance-as-event occurs on a particular night with a particular audience, but performance-as-work-of-art is a conflation of multiple performances and viewers. The record as fixed and authoritative historical "proof" of a particular event does not fit well into this reality because the work itself is not fixed and neither is it authoritative in any of its particular instantiations.

Leaving behind the idea of the record as "fixed and authoritative" proof, Abbot et al. believe that documentors of performance (whether through video, photography, writing, or another medium) appraise even as they create documents.[11] They appraise the work itself, either consciously or unconsciously, to determine what they will include in the document, deciding what perspective and

[9] Ibid, 134-135.
[10] Daisy Abbott, Sarah Jones, and Seamus Ross, "Theoritical Discussions on Digital Representations of Performance," in *Capturing the Essence of Performance: The Challenges of Intangible Heritage* (Brussels: P.E.I. Peter Lang, 2010), 83.
[11] Ibid, 84.

which instantiation will be represented. Documents of performing arts necessarily reflect a limited perspective—the view of the writer of the review, the photographer, or the videographer. The appraisal activities that go into creation of a performing arts document come before traditional archival appraisal activities. At a fundamental level, then, these documents cannot be "fixed and authoritative."

Jess Allen's article "Depth-Charge in the Archive: the Documentation of Performance Re-visited in the Digital Age" addresses similar concerns with the limits of any one representation of a performance. Allen points out that some of these limits—the reduction of multiple audience experiences or multiple instantiations—may be overcome by the availability of many reactions and records of experiences made possible by online communities.[12] As audience members blog about their experiences, perhaps post videos, or link to the theatre's website and to other reviews they create a rich contextualized group of documents that reflect just the multiplicity of perspectives that a live audience might have as a group. For archivists, Allen says, knowledge of and access to the community that surrounds a performance may help to provide balanced and less interventionist documentation. This echoes Samuels' belief in the need for communication between the archivist and the community she documents.

Our final work in realm of archival appraisal, Joan M. Schwartz's article "Coming to Terms with Photographs: Descriptive Standards, Lingustic 'Othering,' and the Margins of Archivy," brings us back to Briet's thoughts about what may be

[12] Jess Allen, "Depth-charge in the archive: the documentation of performance revisited in the digital age," *Research in Dance Education* 11, no. 1 (March 2010): 66.

called a document. In performing arts archives as in other archives, the items that can be brought into the documentary universe are limited by the tools we have to describe them. Schwartz discusses the way in which current description practices for non-textual materials (she focuses on photographs, but the discussion is salient also for such things as costumes or props) alienates them from their context in collections and linguistically "others" them, defining them by their non-textual nature rather than by their intellectual place in the collection. She calls for a more integrated approach, and the end of the "text" and "non-text" dichotomy. For instance, rather than having an "A/V" series that included videos of all performances, or using item-level cataloguing for objects (tending to decontextualize them), an archivist could create stronger intellectual connections between the video recording of a performance and the textual material surrounding that performance.[13] An awareness of the dangers of linguistic othering is useful to performing arts archivists as, first, they think about the universe of possible documentation of a work (not shying away from "non-text") and, second, as they attempt to describe what they have collected. Photographs and video, for instance, are integral part of performing arts collections and, using Schwartz's argument, should not be separated from their contexts.

At this point, I will move away from the discourse of archival appraisal to focus on the works of theorists in performance and theatre studies. We can trace some of the current discussion of performing arts documentation in performance

[13] Joan M. Schwartz, "Coming to Terms with Photographs: Descriptive Standards, Lingustic 'Othering,' and the Margins of Archivy," *Archivaria*, no. 54 (Fall 2002): 153.

and theatre studies to the 1970s and 1980s. In the preface to *The New Theatre: Performance Documentation*, an anthology of writings from *The Drama Review* published in 1974, editor Michael Kirby begins in much the same place that archival appraisal theory began earlier in the century. Documentation should be objective and non-biased according to Kirby, and give an accurate representation of what really happened during a performance so that others who were not able to experience the work live can create their own perspective without the filter of the original observer.[14] Many of the essays in the anthology and in journals like *The Drama Review* and later *New Theatre Quarterly* show this focus. They are heavy on description, light on what would have been viewed as "interpretation." This mission for the documentor bears a remarkable resemblance to the representation of the archivist's mission in early archival literature, the goal for both being self-effacement and the objective transmission of historical fact.

Peggy Phelan is another early influential voice in performance studies. Her book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* set the stage for much future discussion of the meaning of documentation of performance. Like Jenkinson, Phelan contributes to the discussion through the clarity and purity of her stance--that performance *cannot* be documented. She claims, "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations; once it does so,

[14] preface to *The New Theatre: Performance Documentation*, ed. Michael Kirby (New York: New York University Press, 1974).

it becomes something other than performance."[15] For Phelan, recording and documenting performance is an attempt to force it into the very system of economic reproduction and gain that it naturally resists as an ephemeral art form. Because performance is fundamentally ephemeral, a document cannot provide an experience of past performance in a real sense. Her ideas are a firm break from Kirby, for whom the documentary evidence of theatre could provide a valuable experience of the work if the documentor rigorously adhered to the "facts" of the performance as it was.

Much of the discussion of performance documentation in the 1970s and 1980s centered specifically on the use of video. D. Varney and R. Fensham, in their article "More-than-less-than: Liveness, video recording, and the future of performance," take a pragmatic approach to video, emphasizing the opportunities for research that video documentation provides. They focus not on whether or not video captures the essence of performance but rather on the uses that can be made of videos. Responding to Phelan's insistence that performance cannot be represented by documentation, they point out that her own research was enabled by images of past performance. They say that:

> to propose that performance can maintain its separateness from mediatized images is to perpetuate, unrealistically, a binary logic of the live and the recorded, the pure and the contaminated, the original

[15] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146.

and its encroachment. This binary logic cannot be maintained if we want to research performance.[16]

Varney and Fensham argue that video documentation of performance provides rich opportunities for research that could not be done otherwise, but they do not describe who is the best person to create these videos. The archivist should be aware of both these viewpoints coming from performance and theatre studies scholars--those that are hostile to the idea of deliberate documentation (such as Phelan's) and those that welcome documents, especially video documents, which allow them access to past performance.

Philip Auslander's 2006 article "The Performativity of Performance Documentation" lays out some important distinctions in the kinds of documentation of the art of performance, mostly focused on types of image-based documentation. He divides photographs and videos into two categories: documentary (meaning an image taken during an actual performance enacted for a live audience) and theatrical (meaning an image taken in a staged environment that was created in order to serve as a link to the "essence" of the live event). The documentary mode acknowledges the situated nature of the work, and attempts to capture a specific instantiation of a performance. The theatrical mode treats the performance as an artistic work with a unity and essence that transcends a particular instantiation. In Auslander's opinion, documentation of performing arts as it is usually practiced fits better into the paradigm of reproduction of fine art than it does into an

[16] D. Varney and R. Fensham, "More-than-less-than: Liveness, video recording, and the future of performance," *New Theatre Quarterly* XVI, no. 61 (2000): 89.

ethnographic paradigm, in great part because it tends to focus on capturing the "work" and not audience contribution, perception, or reception, .[17] Auslander says:

> I submit that the presence of the initial audience has no real importance to the performance as an entity whose continued life is through its documentation because our usual concern as consumers of such documentation is with recreating the artist's work, not the total interaction.[18]

Partly because of this focus on the part of consumers of documentation, Auslander sees the boundary between documentary and theatrical modes of documentation as "shaky"[19] Unlike Peggy Phelan, Auslander also believes that the document itself can also be performative, that it can provide a real experience of a performance whether or not it directly correlates to a specific instantiation of that performance.[20]

Matthew Reason's book *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* ties together much of the previous scholarship on performance documentation. He sees transience in live performance both as an aesthetic value and a political statement, but points out that even as we valorize the qualities of ephemerality and disappearance in performance, we do not actually want performance to disappear. He points out that "knowledge of loss is only

[17] Philip Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 3: 6.
[18] Ibid, 6-7
[19] Ibid, 4.
[20] Ibid, 9.

possible through the act of memory,"[21] and agrees with Varney and Fensham in recognizing a "correspondence and mutual dependency between documentation, scholarship, and legitimacy."[22] Reason's book also provides a useful taxonomy of types of documentation, splitting them into written documents, photographs, and video, and discusses the strengths and weaknesses of each. Unlike many recent theorists who limit their discussions to video, Reason points out that written description has strengths that visual documentary forms do not. This discussion is helpful to the archivist as he determines the most appropriate ways to document a production.

Joining the conversation on the value of documentation for research, Paul Stapleton points out that research in performing arts fields has a different goal than research in some other fields. The goal of performance research is not, he says, reproducible results that call for straightforward interpretation. In fact, performance research calls for the possibility of multiple interpretations.[23] The documents created to support this kind of research can and should support and reflect this non-objective, perspectived approach. Because performance research is based on the concept of interpretation, the fact that the document of the performance is itself interpretation is not troubling to Stapleton. Rather, he encourages the documentor to be aware of the performative nature of his own

[21] Matthew Reason, *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 20.
[22] Ibid, 45.
[23] Paul Stapleton, "Dialogic Evidence: Documentation of Ephemeral Events," *Body, Space & Technology* 7, no. 2 (2008).

role.[24] Echoing Reason on the role of documents in performance scholarship, Stapleton also points out that performance documentation functions as a form of cultural hegemony, ensuring the continuing importance of the performances it records over performances that are not recorded.

A final useful voice from performance and theatre studies is that of Diane Taylor. In her book *The Archive and the Repertoire*, she makes the distinction between the archive of performance, a collection of items containing information and supposedly resistant to change, and the repertoire, which she defines as embodied memory, capable of being passed from one body to another, ephemeral, and non-reproducible.[25] This distinction enriches the discussion about documentation and memory. There is a difference between remembering and forgetting, but there are also, as Taylor reminds us, distinctions between kinds of memory. While the presence of repertoire can be traced through archival means, the embodied memory itself is necessarily outside of the realm of the archive.

In the midst of the theoretical discussion in both the archival and the performance communities, there are also practitioners in both fields attempting to put theory into practice. Exploring their work will move us closer to understanding the role of the archivist in documenting performance. One performing arts archivist writing essentially from a practitioner's point of view is Francesca Marini. She encourages archivists to be involved in the activities they document, saying, “Direct

[24] Ibid.
[25] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 19-20.

involvement in and understanding of practice is a key element in the study of theatre and performance and in the management of its sources held in the archives. Performing arts archivists are always in close contact with theatre practice and are often directly a part of it."[26] She also holds the view that records created in performing arts contexts are dynamic, and that some never become fixed. Even records that have acquired a specific form and have arrived at the archives may get creatively re-used. Because even the contents of the archive are always evolving, Marini believes that archivists can "play an active role in the creation of new documentation,"[27] especially if artists want to document their work but need outside help to do so. If artists do not want a record of their work, however, this wish must be respected because "archives are as much about remembering as they are about forgetting."[28]

Performing arts archivists have begun to turn their focus to their users as well as to the community they document. Bonnie Hewson identifies three user communities of the Victoria and Albert Museum's Theatre Collection and the performing arts materials at University College London: academic users, performing arts users, and the general public. Knowing who uses performing arts materials and what they use them for, Hewson says, will make archives "stronger, more resilient and more valuable."[29] By this she means that making performing arts materials available to more diverse communities in more ways will ensure the continued

[26] Francesca Marini, "Performing Arts Archives," *Theatre History Studies* 28 (2008): 30.
[27] Ibid, 32-33.
[28] Ibid, 31.
[29] Bonnie Hewson, "The Other Challenge of Intangible Heritage," in *Capturing the Essence of Performance: The Challenge of Intangible Heritage* (Brussels: P.E.I. Peter Lang, 2010), 34-35.

relevance of those materials and make the archives a more integral and integrated part of a society's cultural heritage. It is just as important, according to her, "to think about your users as it is to think about how to capture liveness."[30] Hewson's focus on users relates to the observations of Matthew Reason, Paul Stapleton, and others who emphasize that part of the importance of documentation is the use that is made of it both in the scholarly world and outside of it.

Sarah Whatley and Ross Varney discuss their work with the Siobhan Davies online archive in the article "Siobhan Davies Dance Online: The Digital Archive and Documenting the Dance Making Process." In this digital archive, recordings that were originally created for rehearsal purposes (footage that dancers took of other dancers so they could see themselves, for instance) is combined with more polished records of the finished works in performance.[31] While the former type of recording is more classically "archival" because it was created as a natural and perhaps essential part of the troupe's daily activities, it is completed and contextualized by the latter type of recording, which was consciously created for the purpose of preserving the troupe's legacy. Hoping to preserve robust records of process as well as product, Whatley and Varney hoped that they would encounter written documentation of rehearsals and concepts as well as video recordings, but discovered that few such records existed. Echoing Phelan, they conclude that "The process, like the dance itself, seems to reside only in its own disappearance and

[30] Ibid.
[31] Sarah Whatley and Ross Varney, "Siobhan Davies Dance Online: The Digital Archive and Documenting the Dance Making Process," in *Capturing the Essence of Performance: The Challenge of Intangible Heritage* (Brussels: P.E.I. Peter Lang, 2010), 61.

vanishing, and therefore almost antithetical to any archival process."[32] A visit to the Siobhan Davies Dance Online site, however, may show that neither the process nor the performance has quite disappeared, partly due to the efforts of Whatley and Varney.

Becky Edmunds' article "A Work of Art from a Work of Art" explores a radically artistic perception of performing arts documentation. Herself an artist, Edmunds discusses her partnership with a dancer to document the dancer's work over time as an artistic endeavor. While she acknowledges that "the use of video as a tool for the documentation of dance art is often seen as producing a secondary product - one that is inferior to the live event,"[33] she seeks to create a personal artistic expression of the event that can stand on its own as a separate work. She creates recordings that document "my process, my looking, my decision making, my experience of the dance"[34] and says, "I was not aiming to be neutral, and I was not on the outside of the work."[35] Edmunds' style of documentation acknowledges what many of the theorists I have reviewed attempt to express--that it is impossible for any record to be impartial--but celebrates this fact instead of mourning it. She indicates that this kind of documentation requires the establishment of a trusting relationship with the performer, who must be sure that the documentor shares his or her understanding of the performance to a certain extent before building on it to create the documentary reflection.

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[32] Ibid.
[33] Becky Edmunds, "A Work of Art from a Work of Art," in *Capturing the Essence of Performance: The Challenges of Intangible Heritage* (Brussels: P.E.I. Peter Lang, 2010), 475.
[34] Ibid, 477.
[35] Ibid, 480.

As we finish thinking about documentation practitioners, it is helpful to review the work of a few artists who document their own work in various ways. Watching the efforts of artists who see documentation as a vital part of their art can help archivists know how best to support the preservation of their work. In his book *Tracing the Footprints*, performer John Freeman uses reflective writing as a way to document process. He says of his work that it is "about a method of documentation, which is part of the practice of making performance"[36] and writes in an attempt to honestly portray his experience of performance making. He believes that any attempt at definitive interpretation (even by the creator of the work) is doomed to failure, but that he can accurately and truthfully portray his own changing perceptions of the performance over time.

The performance group *Blast Theory* documents itself extensively both while it is creating and while it is presenting its work. This documentation serves multiple purposes. It is a marketing tool, it makes future research possible, and it preserves the essence or concept of the work. For *Blast Theory*, documentation is a form of dialogue with the work, a "reflection and response which can be used both as a tool in the creative process and as a document containing tacit knowledge."[37] Auslander's idea of theatrical documentation comes into play here, as does the idea of documentation giving performance the ability to be studied and discussed.

The final conversations I will survey may seem at first to be somewhat

[36] John Freeman, *Tracing the Footprints: Documenting the Process of Performance* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2003), x.
[37] Annet Dekker and Rachel Somer-Miles, *Virtueel Platform Research: Blast Theory*, ed. Rachel Feuchtwang (n.p.: Virtueel Platform, 2011), 29-30.

tangential to the work of performance documentation and archiving, but deal with many of the same concepts and difficulties. The realms of fine art conservation and museum studies have grown in recent years to embrace a broad range of art and display forms, some more ephemeral or performative than others. Ways of thinking about what constitutes the "work" in the fine art realm or how objects can be interpreted in museum settings can cross over to inform discussions of performing arts as well.

Gordon Fyfe's 2004 article "Reproductions, cultural capital and museums: aspects of the culture of copies" traces the history of reproducing fine art, and how the shift from engravings to photographs altered the way the public could experience the work and changed the way cultural capital could be disseminated. He says of reproductions that they have:

> a particular status as objectifications of cultural capital because the moment of their consumption often invites questions as to what is present to the gaze, what is absent and how far the artist's intentions have been realized. The reproduced image is vulnerable to the charge that a complete meaning is absent or that the original meaning is subverted.[38]

As opposed to the engraving, where the mediation of another hand was clear and expected, the photograph "created the illusion of communication without

[38] Gordon Fyfe, "Reproductions, cultural capital and museums: aspects of the culture of copies," *Museum and Society* 2, no. 1 (March 2004): 51.

mediation."[39] Fyfe's discussion of the rise of photography as a means of reproducing fine art resonates with the rise of video recording in the latter half of the 20th century as a means of documenting and reproducing performance. Fyfe says that struggles over the classification of reproductions (such as the tension between Phelan affirming that performance necessarily disappears and others who believe that documents can provide an adequate experience of the work) are of interest because they provide privileged moments for us to see into "the social production of the difference between art and artefact and to witness the valorisation of that distinction as cultural capital."[40]

In his article "The Artist's Intentions and the Intentional Fallacy in Fine Arts Conservation," Steven W. Dykstra references an ongoing debate in conservation about whether the artist's intentions should be taken into account in conservation of his work. He discusses what we can and cannot know about an artist's intention and how those limits should figure into art conservation practices. Part of the difficulty of attempting to maintain a piece of art as the artist wanted it is its existence in time—the natural decay of materials and colors. On a different scale, this is the same problem that documentors of performing arts face—ephemerality. When conservators, critics, and art historians discuss the work, they must translate their experience of it into words. The intentional fallacy, Dykstra says, "comes into play when we use our own perceptions and phrases to put the artist's meaning into

[39] Ibid, 52.
[40] Ibid, 62.

words--meanings that are, by nature, unspoken in the work of art."[41] Performing arts archivists must also deal with artistic intention, and the translation of that intention from one medium to another in order to preserve it. Dykstra says that contemporary art lends itself to a conservation approach that remains connected with the artist, who must often explain the significance of the work, what is important to save and what is not.[42] This could also be said, perhaps, of contemporary performance. Without a close connection with the artist such as Edmunds discussed, the documentor might miss important aspects of the work.

Robyn Sloggett helps to flesh out some of the concepts that Dykstra talks about in her article "Beyond the Material: Idea, Concept, Process, and Their Function in the Conservation of the Conceptual Art of Mike Parr." In her work conserving the work of artist Mike Parr, Sloggett sides with the conservators who believe that the remnant or result of conservation should reflect intention. Parr's work is partly performative in nature, welcoming the effects of time, anticipating and welcoming deterioration as a *part* of the work itself. Sloggett says of his self-portraits that "It is inappropriate to conserve and stabilize these drawings because they are the working methodology that delineates the psychological content of the self-portrait. The drawing is not the self-portrait, the process it signifies is."[43] Other works are meant to be more stable, however, and part of the conservation process is

[41] Steven W. Dykstra, "The Artist's Intentions and the Intentional Fallacy in Fine Arts Conservation," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 35, no. 3 (Fall-Winter 1996): 208.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Robyn Sloggett, "Beyond the Material: Idea, Concept, Process, and their Function in the Conservation of the Conceptual Art of Mike Parr," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 37, no. 3 (Fall-Winter 1998): 319.

determining the appropriate level of stabilization for each work in its context. Sloggett's work with Parr suggests that documentation, like conservation, need not be one-size-fits-all, that heavy documentation may be more appropriate for some performing arts than for others, or for some particular works than for others. Her work is also useful to consider because Parr's art is somewhat performative in nature, showing that the lines between fine art and performance art are sometimes thinly drawn.

A final voice blurs these lines even more. Corina MacDonald, in her article "Scoring the Work: Documenting Practice and Performance in Variable Media Art" brings us full circle, beginning with Suzanne Briet in her discussion of the evolving nature of documents in the context of variable media art. Briet, says MacDonald, "predicted that knowledge creation and documentation would increasingly become parallel and even convergent enterprises."[44] This is clear in both variable media art and in performance. For variable media art, part of the goal of documentation may be future re-presentation, the creation of a kind of "score" which considers facets of the "container (infrastructure), content (experience) and context (tacit knowledge)."[45] Summarizing much of the ground covered by archivists and theatre scholars in their attempts to define appropriate methods for documentation, MacDonald concludes that "Suzanne Briet's definition of the document as a sign recorded in order to reconstruct a phenomenon brings to the foreground of this

[44] Corina MacDonald, "Scoring the Work: Documenting Practice and Performance in Variable Media Art," *Leonardo* 42, no. 1 (February 2009): 62.
[45] Ibid.

investigation the interdependent and recombinatory relationship that exist between a work and its documentation."[46]

It may be helpful at this point to step back and survey the ground we have covered. Derrida gave us a starting place by suggesting that the archive is open and creates the very thing it records or preserves. Briet, a founding mother of information science, pointed out that the documentary universe is as broad as our ability to categorize and order it. From these two foundational thinkers, we moved on to a discussion of general archival appraisal theory in the 20th century, highlighting Jenkinson's non-interventionist approach, Booms' suggestion of the archivist's instinct as a valid way to appraise a document, and Samuels' call for an understanding of the function of the organization to be documented and close involvement with document creators. Joan Schwartz reminded us that all forms of documents should be afforded equal place in the archive, not separated into text and non-text. Several theorists of digital archives of performance brought us back to Derrida's assertion that the archive is open and dynamic rather than closed and fixed.

In the realm of theatre and performance studies, we started with Michael Kirby's focus on "objective" documentation and with Peggy Phelan's insistence that performance cannot be re-produced without becoming something other than performance. D. Varney and R. Fensham highlighted the use of video as a documentation tool, and affirmed that documents can serve as a legitimate trace of

[46] Ibid, 63.

performance, enabling study. Philip Auslander divided performance documentation into the documentary and theatrical modes, claiming that documents can, in fact, provide a legitimate experience of performance, and that they themselves are performative. Matthew Reason parsed types of performance documentation, pointing out strengths and weaknesses of each, and pointed out that documentation lends cultural significance to performance that would otherwise be lost. Paul Stapleton suggested that the partial, perspectived nature of performance documentation mirrors the kind of research that scholars of performance want to perform, and Diane Taylor theorized a difference between archive-memory and repertoire-memory. The work of practitioners in performing arts archives and documentation echoed many of the theoretical concerns—the need for close connection with artists, the conception of the document as a secondary created (and possibly creative) work, reflective of but not identical to the original work.

In the realm of museum studies, Gordon Fyfe discussed reproduction of art as a means of spreading cultural capital, and discussed the rise of photography as a documentary form in a way that mirrors the rise of video as a way to document performance. Steven W. Dykstra and Robyn Sloggett gave us a glimpse into the debate in the conservation world about the importance of the artist's intention in preserving her work, which is salient to archivists as they decide how much of the artist's input is necessary to appraise the remnants of the work of performing artists. Finally, Corina MacDonald sheds new light on Suzanne Briet as she discusses

the connection between documentary theory and the preservation of variable media art work.

The voice of the artist is minimal in all of these discussions. Artists who do document their work, such as *Blast Theory* and John Freeman, often do so as an extension of the art itself, following Briet's prediction that "knowledge creation and documentation would increasingly become parallel and even convergent enterprises."[47] These artists are usually well-established and connected with the world of theatre scholarship. The world of semi-professional and amateur theatre and performance is not discussed in the literature as much as the work of these established artists who are aware of their legacy and work actively to preserve it. This study attempts to draw on the various conversations we have engaged in order to address this (perhaps more fragile) community by discovering the opinions and behaviors of participants in an annual fringe festival in Austin, Texas and by observing an archivist's interaction with this community. The following survey and case study are framed by all of these conversations.

[47] MacDonald, 62.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain a wider understanding of the perspective of performing artists (especially amateur or semi-professional performing artists) about documentation of their work and to observe an archivist interacting with these artists. I sought to address three main research questions:

1) How do performing artists perceive performance documentation?

2) How do performing artists document themselves?

3) What would happen if an archivist took an active approach to documenting performing arts, entering into a performing arts community and creating records as well as accepting those created by the community itself?

In order to answer these questions, I established a connection with the administrators of the 2012 FronteraFest Fringe Festival and with a fellow archives student at The School of Information at The University of Texas.

FronteraFest is a collaboration between Hyde Park Theatre (a small area theatre) and Scriptworks (a group based in Austin dedicated to supporting emerging playwrights and developing new dramatic works). The festival takes place in January and February every year, consisting of, according to the FronteraFest website, "five weeks of alternative, off-beat, new, and just plain off-the-wall fringe theatre."[48] The producer of FronteraFest 2012, Christi Moore, sees the festival as both on equalizer and an incubator within the larger Austin theatre culture..[49] She

[48] Hyde Park Theatre, "FronteraFest 2012," Hyde Park Theatre, accessed April 24, 2012, http://www.fronterafest.org/site/index.html.
[49] Christi Moore, interview by author, Austin, Texas, October 3, 2011.

described it as an equalizer because the festival accepts entries on a first-come, first-serve basis, meaning that both experienced artists and newcomers are able to present their work. She called it an incubator because many artists use the festival as a low-risk way to try out new concepts and early drafts in front of a live audience.

FronteraFest was an ideal place to study perspectives on performing arts documentation and to experiment with methods of documentation because a diverse pool of performing artists—with varying levels of experience and different artistic forms—converge within it to create their work. In this section, I will describe my partnership with FronteraFest for the purposes of this study. I will first discuss the survey component and then the case study component of this research. Both components were approved by the Institutional Review Board at The University of Texas at Austin. To attain this approval, I submitted a proposal to the board outlining the study and including the text of the survey and other communications to be sent to the festival participants.

3.1 Survey

The 2012 FronteraFest Fringe Festival consisted of several components. The Short Fringe component featured groupings of short pieces throughout the week at Hyde Park Theatre, with four groups specially selected by Scriptworks to be commissioned pieces in the festival. *Mi Casa Es Tu Teatro* was a one-afternoon grouping of site-specific pieces, and "Bring Your Own Venue" was a way for local performing arts groups already producing performances to publicize these works through the festival. Participants in Short Fringe were selected primarily on a first-

come first-serve basis, with applications made available in August 2011. Other participating artists established collaboration with the festival in the months of August thru November.

My intended subject pool for this survey was all participants in the 2012 festival. Through the festival producer, I sent an anonymous survey to everyone who had been accepted to the festival in late September. In mid-November, I requested that the administrator send the survey again, to capture responses from participants who had joined the festival since the survey was originally sent out. This second email was sent to the same participants that had received it in late September as well as new participants added since that time, 104 people in all. The survey closed on the first of December.

The 16-question survey was a combination of 13 multiple-choice and three short answer questions regarding the participants' attitudes and practices related to performing arts documentation (See Appendix A for complete text of the survey). 44 respondents replied to the survey out of the 104 festival participants who had received it. One of these respondents indicated that he or she was under 18; that response was removed because the Institutional Review Board approval for this study did not apply to minors. Another five responses were unfinished due to unknown technical problems. These unfinished responses all came in during the first day the survey was open; several respondents contacted the festival producer to tell her they were not able to continue to the second page of the survey. When she informed me of this problem, I reloaded the survey, after which there seemed to be

no further problems. I removed these five unfinished responses from the pool of results, leaving 38 responses in my final pool After all of the responses were collected, I coded two of the short-answer questions for themes (the remaining short-answer question was the title of the work the respondent was to perform at FronteraFest) and extracted relevant quotations from these responses to support these themes. Appendix B is a table of all survey respondents with individual identification numbers linked to demographic information.

3.1.1 Demographics

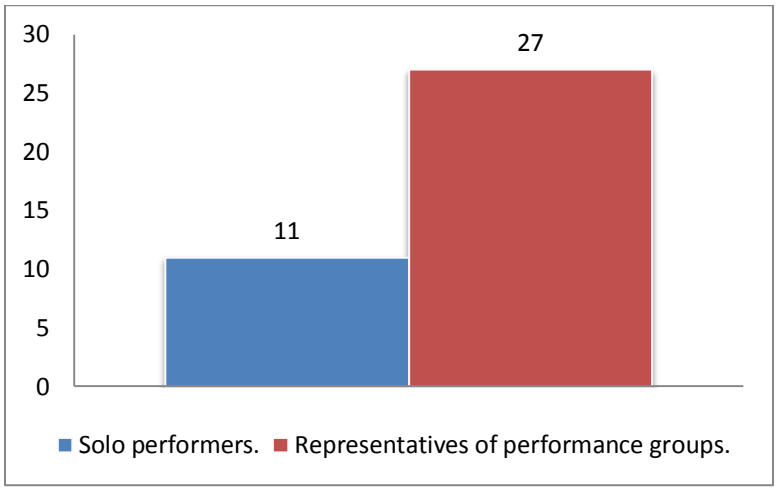

Figure 1. Question 3: Number of solo performers compared to number of representatives of performance groups. (n=38).

In Question 3, 11 of the respondents identified themselves as solo performers, while 27 said they were working with a performance group. These responses indicated to me that the opinions represented in the survey spanned the thoughts both of collaborative artists and "one-man shows."

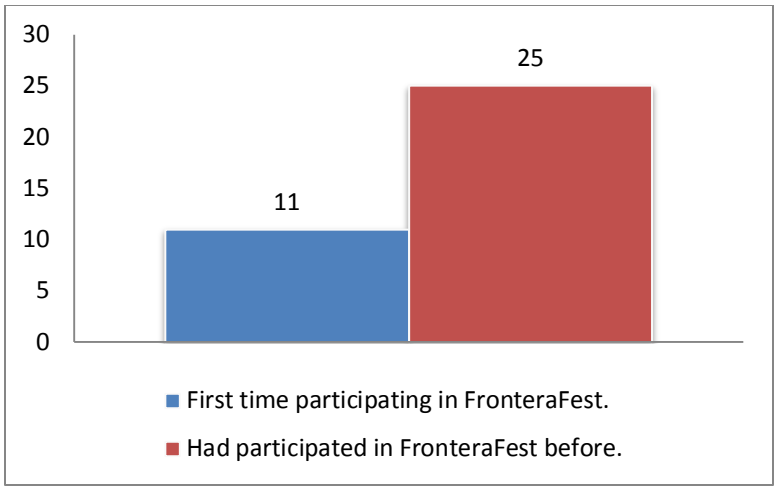

Figure 2. Question 5: Respondents' level of experience with the FronteraFest Fringe Festival (n=36).

In Question 5, 11 of the performers indicated that it was their first time participating in FronteraFest, while 25 indicated that they had participated before. Two respondents did not answer Question 5. While many of the respondents were familiar with the FronteraFest, others were not. This response helps demonstrate that a varied demographic group responded to the survey.

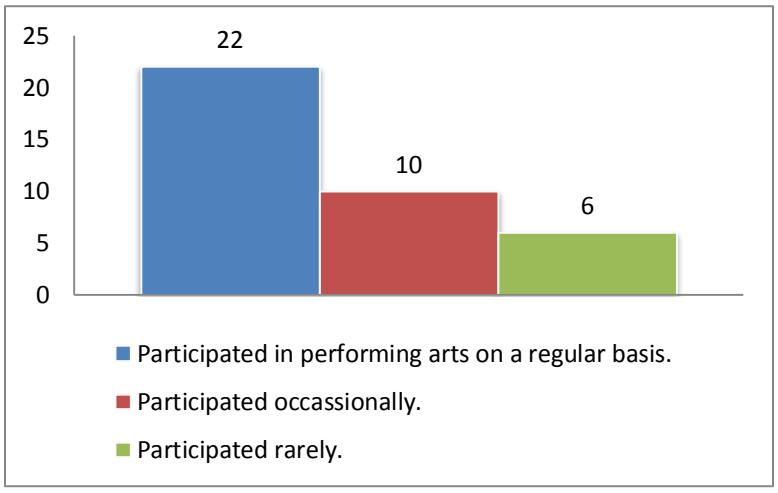

Figure 3. Question 6: Respondents' level of participation in performing arts (n=38).

Twenty-two out of the 38 respondents indicated that they participated in performing arts on a regular basis (four or more times a year), while ten participated occasionally (one to three times a year). Another six respondents indicated that they had been involved in the creation of performance only a few times in the past. The response group as a whole, then, represented a broad range of experience in performing arts, from experienced performers to amateurs. This range makes sense given that FronteraFest is a fringe festival. Fringe festivals typically encourage involvement from both the professional performing arts community and from amateur and less experienced performers. The varied experience of this group gave the potential for more diversity of opinions about performing arts documentation.

3.2 Case Study

Archives student Mary Wegmann of the School of Information at The University of Texas partnered with the 2012 FronteraFest to accomplish several goals. First, she intended to experiment firsthand with documentation methods by partnering with three of the four Scriptworks commissioned groups in order to create robust documentation of their entries into the festival, in the process creating best-practice recommendations for artists and documentors seeking to preserve performing arts. Second, she planned to establish an on-going relationship between the festival and the local Austin History Center to create a collection of festival material at that archive.

For this case study, I observed Wegmann's process beginning with planning meetings with the festival administration in August 2011 through the festival in January and February of 2012, continuing through her finalization of best practice recommendations and her interactions with the Austin History Center. This observation consisted of attending some of Wegmann's meetings with the festival administrator and with the archivist at the Austin History Center, and through conversations with Wegmann about her process. In late February I sent her a list of questions about her experiences. From both my observations of her process and her responses, I drew out aspects of her experience that relate to my research question about the role of the archivist in performing arts documentation. Because the survey was anonymous, I am not sure whether some or all of the groups that Wegmann documented in her project were among the respondents of the survey. If these groups did participate in the documentation project as well as the survey, it is possible that their answers in the survey were influenced by their participation in the project. It is not likely that this is the case, however, because most of Wegmann's interaction with the groups happened in December and early January, after the survey had closed.

4. Findings

The results of both the survey and the case study reflected a broad range of opinions about and approaches to performing arts documentation. While many of these opinions and approaches fit in with the theoretical and practical literature in the field, other results were surprising. I will first discuss the results of the survey component of the study, and then I will discuss the case study.

4.1 Survey Findings

4.1.1 Current Documentation Practices

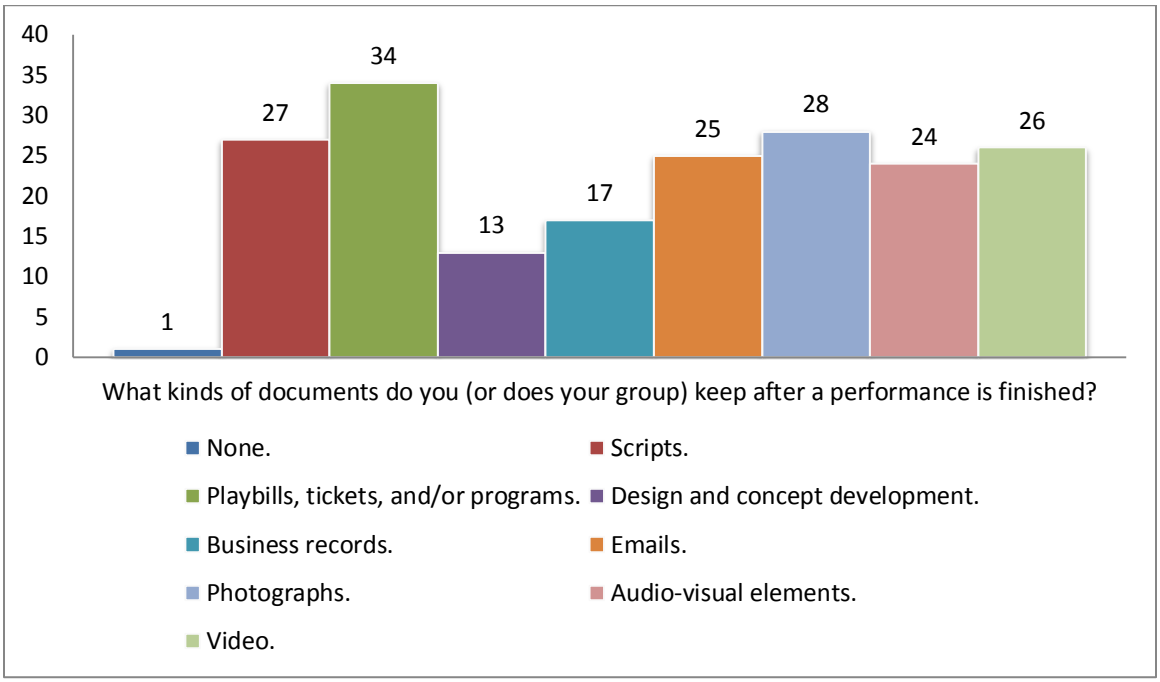

Figure 4. Question 7: Kinds of documents currently collected by respondents (n=38).

Only one respondent indicated that he/she did not keep any materials after finishing a performance. Thirty-four people indicated that they saved playbills, tickets, and/or programs from their shows. The second most-preserved material was photographs of performers, performances, or design elements, with 28

respondents. Twenty-seven people saved scripts, 26 saved video of performances, and 25 saved emails related to the production. Twenty-four respondents kept audio-visual elements of the production, while 17 kept business records. The materials that were least-preserved were records of the design and concept-development process.

These results partly reflect the unique environment of the fringe festival. Many of the pieces in the festival were short performances involving a small collaborative group or a solo performer. These kinds of groups and individuals are unlikely to produce in-depth concept development or design documents in the first place. Many of the groups might not create scripts in the traditional sense. As the groups and individuals varied between professional and non-professional performers, it stands to reason that some, but not all, would preserve business records. In some ways, the results for this question might indicate the kinds of documents these artists create as much as they indicate what they save. Playbills, tickets, and/or programs might be saved more frequently simply because they are the most consistently created kind of documentation of the performances of these groups and individuals. Responses for this question also mirror the way documentation is discussed in the literature I reviewed. Photographs, video, and "ephemera" (usually meaning playbills and programs) feature more prominently in these discussions than design elements or business records.

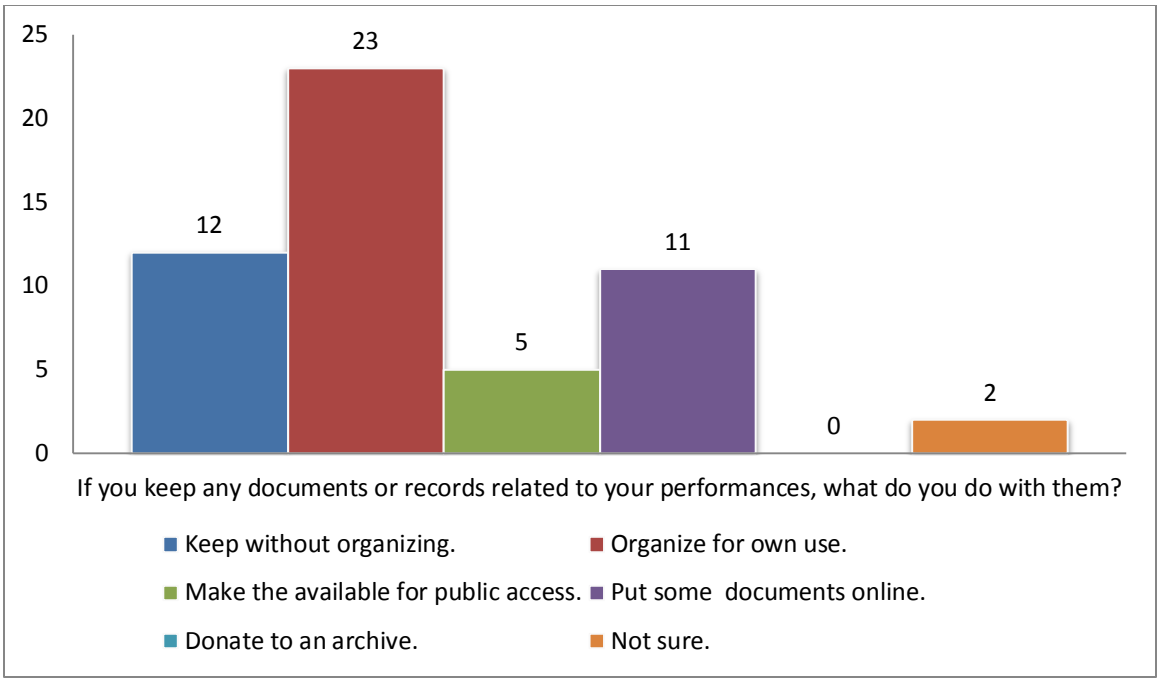

Figure 5. Question 8: Respondents' use of collected documents (n=37).

When asked what they did with the documents they saved, none of the performers indicated that they placed them in an archive. Twenty-three respondents said that the organized them for their own use. Twelve indicated that they keep documents of performance (either digital or paper) without organizing them. Sixteen people either made their documents available for public access or put some of them online.

These results indicate that the performers thought of the documents they preserved less from a historical perspective and more from a pragmatic perspective. The artists surveyed, it would seem, do not think of their records primarily as ways to record and share their legacy. If they did, I would expect to see more responses indicating public access or online presence. Even if some of the respondents do post videos or keep their records in some way that allows other to see them, none of

them partner with archives to preserve their work in a more long-term way. The greatest number of respondents kept and organized documents of past performances for their own use or the use of the group. Responses to later questions may help flesh out what these kinds of uses might be.

Responses to this question tie into the *Blast Theory*'s discussion of their own documentation practices. While scholars discussing documentation tend to focus on documents created for or accessible by the public, *Blast Theory* balanced this focus with the performing artist's perspective and noted that they save documents for their own use—to improve their own performance or to re-create it later—as well as for public consumption.

4.1.2 Desired Documentation Practices

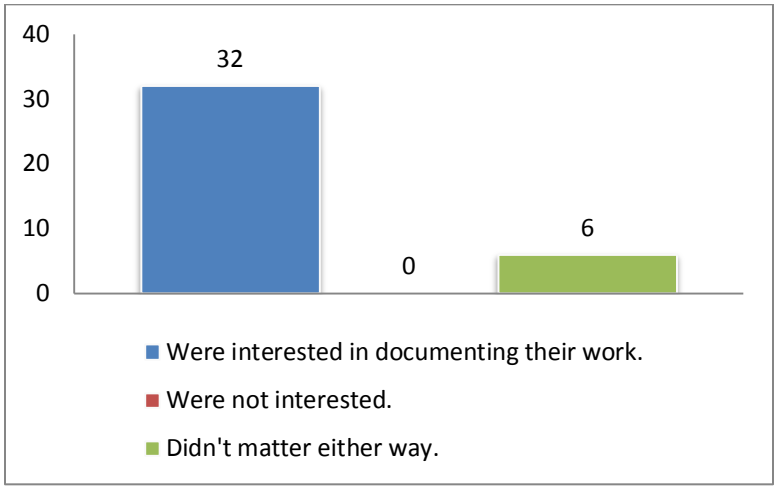

Figure 6. Question 9: Respondents' interest in documenting their work (n=38).

When asked whether they were interested in documenting their performances, 32 out of the 38 respondents replied that they were. Six answered that it didn't matter to them either way. None of the respondents selected the "No, I

would rather not document the performances I am involved with" option. These results are significant because of the body of literature about performing arts documentation that indicates discomfort with the idea of trying to save performing arts. Francesca Marini, for instance, is careful to point out that the artist's wishes concerning documentation must be respected, even if those wishes mean not documenting the work. In this sample of performing artists, however, none of the artists expressed discomfort with the idea of documentation. Most received it positively, and a few received it ambivalently.

These results might relate to the fringe festival context and to the amateur or semi-professional nature of many of the performances. Performers who hold a high view of "liveness" and agree with Phelan that performance cannot be documented and continue to be performance sometimes see video recordings as a threat to the continued health of the art of live performance, and so dislike documentation on principle. These results might be different if the survey was limited only to professional or "high-profile" performing artists who might see a link between thorough documentation and lower attendance of the performance. Theatre professionals have struggled with the possibility of this link for many years, particularly in the context of video recordings. Highly-visible artists might have more at stake if video recordings "replace" or devalue their performance. In this group of respondents and in the context of a fringe festival, however, performing artists seemed receptive to documentation of their art.

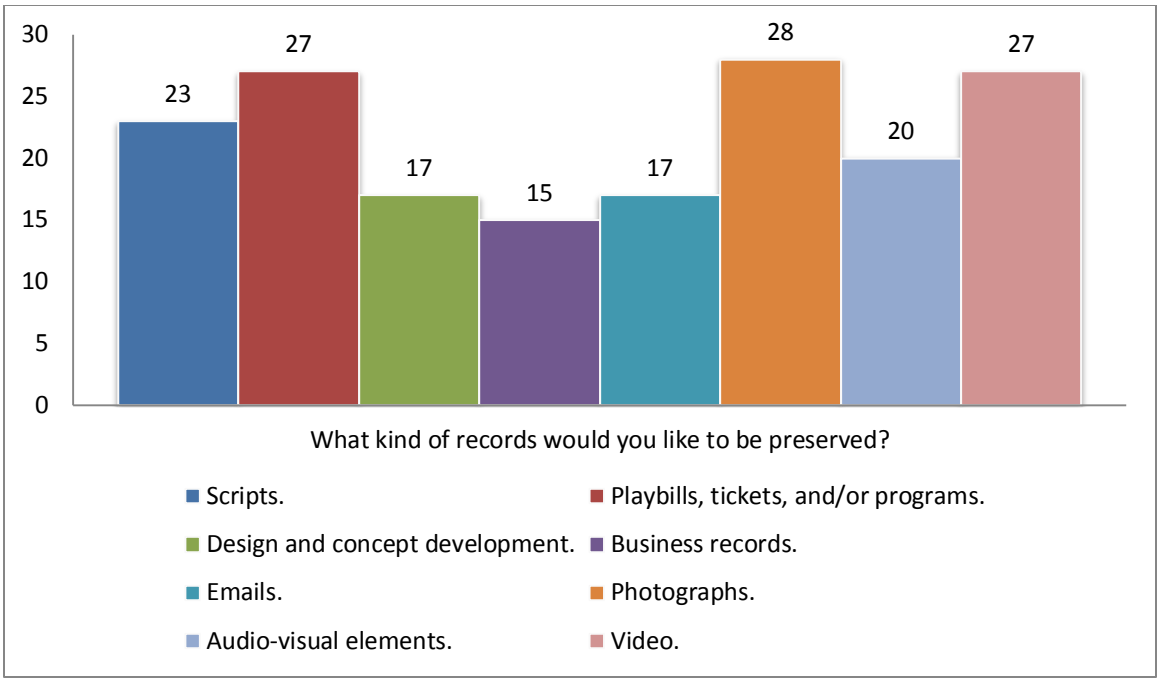

Figure 7. Question 10: Kind of documents respondents would like to preserve (n=33).

When given a list of possible documents to be saved and asked which they would like to be preserved, 28 respondents selected photographs of the production and production elements. The response for Playbills, tickets, and/or programs was selected by 27 people, as was video. Twenty-three respondents indicated scripts. Twenty respondents were interested in saving audio-visual elements, and there were 17 selections each for emails and for records of design. The smallest number of people expressed interest in business records (15 respondents). These selections mirrored the responses to the question about what kinds of documents respondents were already saving from their performances. The same four responses were most popular in both questions, although not in the same order. For these artists, ephemera from the production (playbills, tickets, and programs), photographs, video, and scripts seemed to be the most important

remnants of their work, both practically (indicated by what they already preserve) and theoretically (indicated by what they would like to preserve). From the archivist's perspective, it is interesting to note that these artists seem to value business records less than the other types mentioned. Business records would be most likely out of all the items on the list to be perceived as traditionally "archival," and yet these artists were less interested in preserving them than other documents of their performances.

4.1.3 Perceived value of documentation

In response to the general question, "Do you see value in documenting performance? Please explain:," respondents gave a broad range of justifications for documenting performance. Most respondents expressed positive views of documentation, while a few voiced concerns about "liveness" echoing those present in the literature on documentation. In coding the responses to this question, I found and sorted for five categories of justification for performance documentation, administrative reasons and public relations, historical proof, in-house and rehearsal use, re-staging, and business reasons.

The first kind of justification mentioned by respondents was administrative reasons and public relations. Responses that used this category discussed documentation in terms of grant reporting, applications to festivals, or similar situations in which a performer needs either a sample of his or her work or documentation of it for administrative reasons. Sixteen respondents mentioned various reasons for documentation that fit into this category. One response which

brought up this category of justification said, "We need videos of recent and good improvised performances on our website to put on applications to theatres and festivals. They are reviewed by theatres and festivals that decide whether or not to give us shows."[50] The number of respondents who mentioned the importance of documentation for public relations reasons was interesting because it seems out of proportion to how much this aspect of documentation is mentioned in scholarly literature on the subject. This justification was discussed more by these artists talking about the value of documentation than it is by scholars either in archives or in performance and theatre studies.

The second category, mentioned by 17 participants, was historical proof. This category encompassed comments that treated documentation as reflection or remnant of the work in a more or less archival sense, discussing historical value, memory, or giving artists a way to look back on their past work. One respondent who used this kind of justification expressed a sense of the inadequacy of documentation even while affirming its importance:

> While it's nearly impossible to really share the experience of having gone to a particular performance, to recreate that thrill when the work is successful for those wheo [sic] were not able to attend, I think it's important to do the best possible.[51]

This kind of justification came up more than any others in the responses to this question. It was useful to see that artists with a broad range of experience do,

[50] Response 5.
[51] Response 8.

indeed, have some awareness of the historically situated nature of their work, and desire to preserve "proof" of it for those who were not able to see it. In this case, the preoccupations of scholars of performing arts documentation align, at least to a certain extent, with those of the group they seek to document.

Fifteen respondents mentioned a third category of justification, in-house or rehearsal use, which included discussions of documentation as a way for artists to improve their self-awareness or capture improvisation and choreography. Several of these responses discussed the value for the artist of being able to trace the evolution of her work over time, or to re-create past performances. One respondent who addressed this category of justification said:

> Yes, I think it's valuable because we can refer to our previous work and see how our creative process has changed and (hopefully) grown. Also, we may want to revive the production in it's [sic] original form, or in an expanded form for a new performance.[52]

These responses are significant because the in-house use and rehearsal purposes for producing documentation are more traditionally archival than many that are commonly discussed. Documentation of this kind is produced for the present needs of the group and only later re-purposed as "historical."

A fourth category of justification, given by three respondents, was productions of the same work by other groups. Thorough documentation of a performance could help future performers envision the same script. One respondent

[52] Response 11.

found documentation useful for "either restaging a piece or creating similar work."[53] Only mentioned three times, this theme highlights a unique way of using documentation. Artists who discussed this use might place more emphasis on preserving design records, annotated scripts, and other production-related material that would ease re-creation than would artists who were primarily focused on preserving the artistic experience of their work. Finally, two respondents cited a fifth category of reasons—business and accounting reasons—when explaining the value of documenting performance. One respondent specifically discussed tax reasons, saying, "Some of the documents from the logistical side (receipts, etc.) I keep for tax purposes."[54] The low number of responses citing business reasons for documentation may correspond with the fact that fewer respondents selected business records as records they were interested in saving.

The presence in the survey responses of these five types of justification—public relations, historical proof, in-house or rehearsal use, productions by other groups, and business and accounting—suggests that, far from not wishing their performances to be traced through documentation, many performers have present and practical reasons for documenting their work as well as desiring historical proof of their performances. The literature on performance documentation, both from the archival perspective and from performance and theatre studies, tends to reduce this diverse group of reasons for documentation down to one—historical proof—and evaluate documents solely on their ability to provide it. Responses in this survey

[53] Response 1.
[54] Response 21.

show this focus to be reductive; in reality, performing artist themselves see many kinds of value in documenting their performance.

Aside from these justifications for performance documentation, one more interesting theme came out in responses to this question about the value of documenting performance. This question (Question 11) followed the question asking respondents to select desirable types of documentation from a list that included photographs, administrative records, ephemera, and video (Question 10). Despite this intentional ordering of questions, however, a surprising number of respondents answered Question 11 in ways which indicated that they were thinking primarily of video documentation.

Nine out of 38 responses either mentioned video prominently or assumed the question referred solely to video. One respondent said, "We need videos of recent and good improvised performances on our website to put on applications to theatres and festivals."[55] Another said, somewhat cryptically, "With all of today's technology there should be no reason why live performance should not be documented."[56] I found this emphasis on video (and especially emphasis on the positive value of documenting performance through video) to be significant because of the amount of debate about this point from the scholarly community. Use of video recording spurred on much of the discussion of documentation of performing arts in the 1970s and 1980s. While use of video is widely accepted today, how it should be made and what it means are still not well understood. Here, though, many of the

[55] Response 6.
[56] Response 14.

performing artists responding to the survey assumed that performing arts documentation *was* video recording, and had positive attitudes towards its use for a broad variety of reasons.

4.1.4 The Adequacy of Video Recording

The next question on the survey (Question 12) addressed video more specifically, asking, "In your opinion, can a video adequately capture or preserve a live performance?" The placement of this question may have encouraged some of the strong focus on video recording in the previous question, as both were placed on the same page of the survey and were visible at the same time. The responses to this question varied widely. Here, the performing artists surveyed began to sound more like the performance and theatre scholars we have reviewed, pointing out nuances and limitations, and rhapsodizing over the irreducible nature of the live environment. Four strong themes or issues emerged from responses to this question: audience participation and perceptions, the energy of the live environment, the quality of the recording, and the distinction between the video document as entertainment and as something else (promotional tool, rehearsal aid, or archival record).

Seventeen respondents answered this question about the adequacy of video to capture performance by discussing the place of the audience in performance. Some focused on the ability of an audience member to "see" the play in a way a camera cannot. One respondent said:

> Where should the camera look? At the person speaking? Then you can't adequately watch how another actor may respond, and it's the fluid ability for an audience member to switch focus, on the actor speaking, on the actor responding, on the audience responding, on the focus of lights, on what's not focused in the lights, and so on and so on. Video, like film, can only see what it sees, and not EXPERIENCE as an individual can.[57]

This response brings up another aspect of the place of the audience in the live environment that also came up in other responses—audience as participant in the creation of the performance through its reactions and involvement.

The second theme, the "energy" of the live performance, is connected to the first. Energy was often, but not always, mentioned in connection with the audience's experience and participation. This theme, which was also found in 17 responses, came out strongly because that exact word—energy—was used so often. One respondent said, "The energy of the audience, and the exchange between the performers and the audience, are things that can only be felt in the moment, at the performance."[58] Another mentioned "shared energy."[59] Another said, "No one can be amongst the true energy and experience of the live event unless you are actually

[57] Response 5.
[58] Response 18.
[59] Response 23.

participating and living in the moment."[60] Most respondents who mentioned this energy did so to express their feeling that it could not be captured on a recording.

The third theme, found in 11 responses, was the quality of the video. Some of the respondents who included this theme explained ways in which the loss of the live environment could be softened or mitigated by a good recording. One respondent said:

> If the video is creatively and sensitively filmed by a competent videographer, some of the energy and vitality of the performance can be preserved – especially for someone who was actually viewing the performance and has memory of the initiatory experience. Live performance is best viewed live – that's its primary purpose, after all! But if there is no record, too much is lost. Some is better than none.[61]

This respondent believed that *some* of the energy of a performance might be preserved on video, but only if the video was of good quality. Another respondent believed that a run of the show done specifically for video capture, "where the camera person can move about the stage or the house,"[62] was a way to create the best video possible, even if it was not the same as seeing the performance in person, a comment which ties nicely into Auslander's concept of the theatrical mode of documentation. In general, responses that mentioned the quality of the video did so in a way that softened the idea of its inadequacy to capture performance. A high-

[60] Response 14.
[61] Response 4.
[62] Response 3.th

quality recording, for many of these respondents, was still inadequate, but more adequate than a poor recording.

The fourth theme, present in 13 of the responses to Question 12, was the difference between video as entertainment and video which served another function—archival record, promotional tool, or rehearsal aid. Five of the responses with this theme seemed to indicate that the use of video documentation of performance as entertainment was appropriate or good. One respondent (with a quite positive view of video, and also citing the quality of the recording), said, "Yes, if there is a camera person zooming and a good mic. For smaller productions at least. Large theatrical productions with large casts sometimes it is not the same to watch a video of the performance."[63] This response seems to expect that the viewer is watching the recording to receive the work it represents for enjoyment of the performance. Another respondent said, "I want the video to stand alone as a separate work of art."[64] This response echoes some of the theorists and practitioners reviewed earlier, especially Edmunds, who creates documents of performance that are intended to be experience as separate works of art. In this view, documents of performance can take on a life of their own as entertainment or art, and should be pleasurable in their own right.

Eight of the responses that addressed video as entertainment responded more negatively. One respondent who indicated that he or she primarily used video clips for promotional purposes, said, "I don't ever watch a video after we have

[63] Response 6.
[64] Response 32.

recorded it."[65] While a reason was not given, the answer implies that he or she did not see the video as an adequate representation of the work as art or as entertainment in its own right. Another response made the distinction between video as entertainment or art and video as something else quite explicitly, saying:

> No. I think that video can be very useful, but I've never seen a video of live performance that looked right to me. If you want video, then it is probably best to make a movie – however that happens in your art form. However, video can be a great publicity and education tool.[66]

This response implies that video documentation of performing arts has an appropriate and limited place (publicity and education), but should not be expected to provide an experience of the work in a real sense.

Responses to Question 11 demonstrated a broad range of understandings of purposes and possible values for documentation, and specifically video documentation. Responses to Question 12, however, demonstrated more clearly what some of the respondents thought *ought* to be the place of video. A few respondents were optimistic about the ability of video to provide an experience of the work and to be enjoyed as such, often citing quality of the recording as the critical factor. Others were less sanguine, saying that video cannot or should not attempt to provide an experience of live performance. The dynamic and perspective nature of the presence of the audience was mentioned frequently, as was the intangible "energy" of the live environment. Even many of the respondents who did

[65] Response 26.
[66] Response 19.

not believe that video could adequately capture performance, however, were careful to qualify their statements by saying that video documentation was still useful to them, or could provide a limited, unsatisfactory experience that was better than nothing. One respondent aptly summarized many of the conflicting and conflicted ideas about video documentation that were present in responses to this question: "Preserve = yes. Capture = not so much."[67]

4.1.5 Documentation of FronteraFest 2012

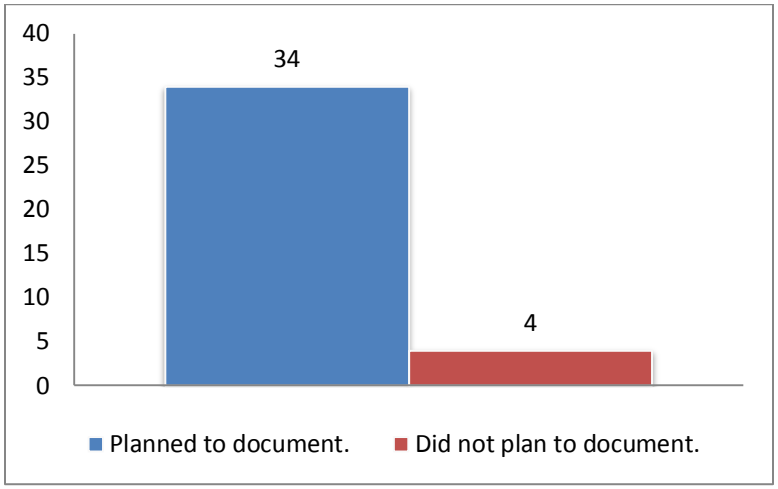

Figure 8. Question 13: Respondents' intentions to document their FronteraFest 2012 performances (n=38).

The last section of the survey asked questions about FronteraFest 2012 specifically. When asked whether they planned to document their performances, 34 of the respondents said yes, while four said no.

[67] Response 38.

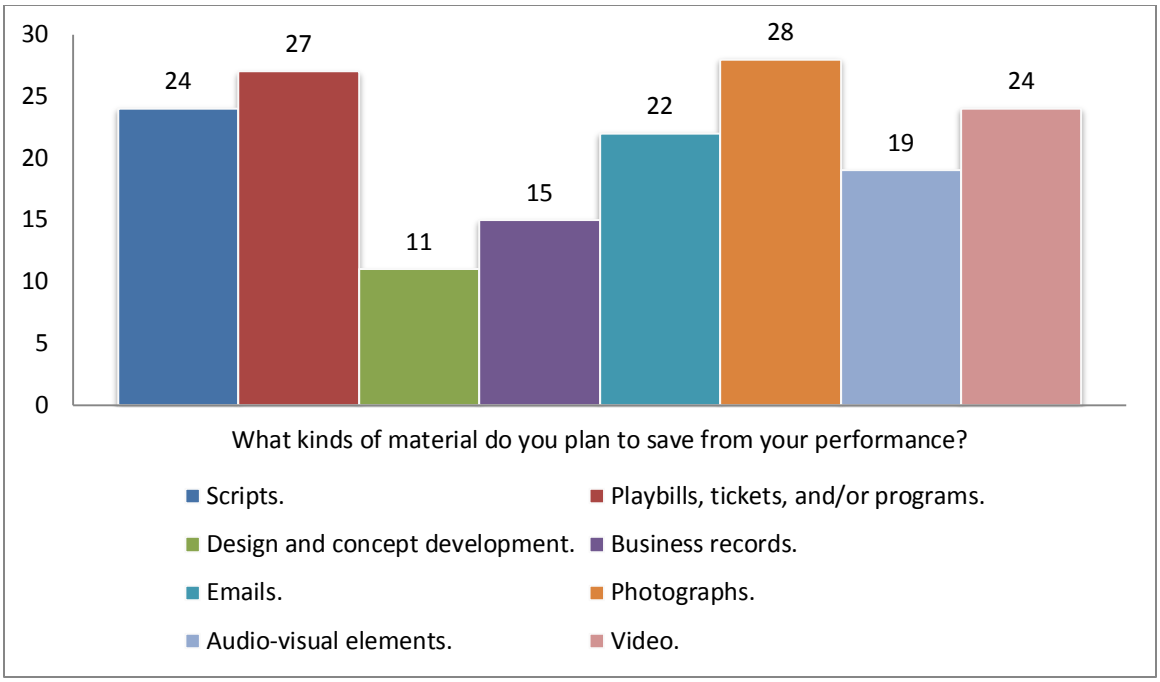

Figure 9. Question 14: Types of documents respondents intended to preserve from their FronteraFest 2012 performance (n=34).

When asked what material they planned to save and presented with the same choices given in Questions 7 and 10, 28 selected photographs, 27 selected playbills, tickets, and/or programs, and 24 each selected scripts and videos of the performance. Twenty-two indicated emails, 19 indicated audio-visual elements, 15 selected business records, and 11 indicated design and concept-development materials. This spread roughly mirrors the last two times the respondents were presented with this list (when they were asked what they usually preserve, and when they were asked what should be preserved), with priority placed on video, photographs, scripts, and ephemera. As in both other cases, business records were near the bottom of the priority list.

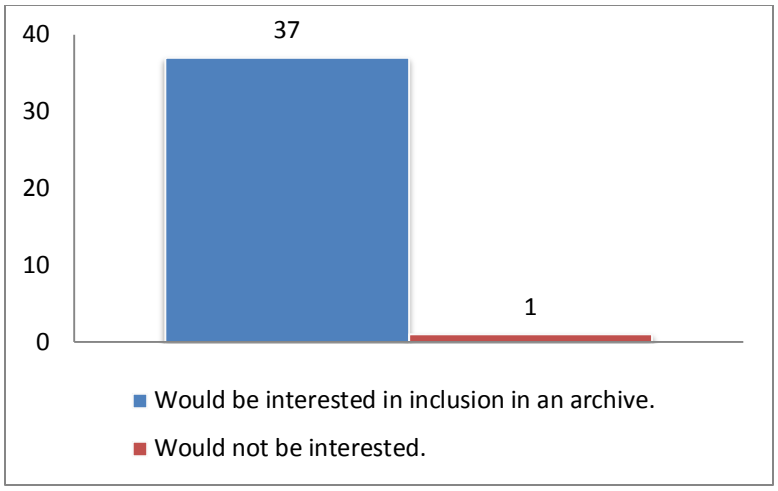

Figure 10. Question 15: Respondents' interest in donating their FronteraFest 2012 performance to a local archive (n=38).

When asked if they would be interested in including their performance in an archival collection for FronteraFest at a local archive, all but one of the respondents replied that they would be. This finding is quite interesting because none of the respondents in Question 8 indicated that they already donate documents of their work to an archives. Putting the responses from these two questions together, I conclude that, while none of these artists currently has a relationship with a local archive, almost all of them would like to enter into such a relationship if it was offered to them, at least in the context of their FronteraFest performances. This finding shows a tremendous opportunity for an archives with a collecting focus in performing arts to establish connections with active performers to document their work.

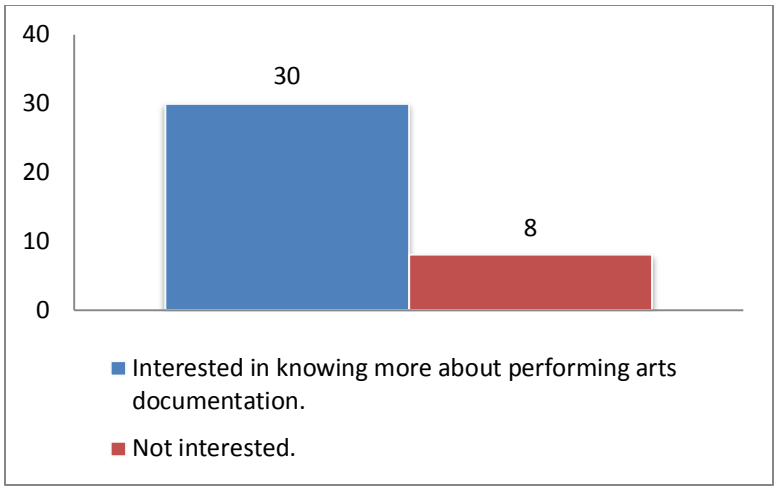

Figure 11. Question 16: Respondents' interest in learning more about performing arts documentation (n=38).

Asked if they would be interested in learning more about best practices in performing arts documentation, 30 respondents said yes, they would be interested, while eight said they would not be interested. As a group, then, these respondents had a great deal of interest in preserving their legacy in Austin and as a part of the festival, and a good deal of interest in learning about documentation for themselves. More respondents were interested in donating their records to an archive than were interested in learning about best practices, but these findings indicate that there would be a place for an archivist in the performing arts community, either as a liaison or as a mentor or teacher of best practices of documentation.

4.1.6 Summary of survey results

Respondents to this survey, representing a range of experience levels as live performers, were overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of documentation of performance, and most expressed either intention or desire to document their

own work. When asked if video documentation in particular could adequately capture performance, many of the performers echoed scholars in the field in expressing their sense of the irreducible complexity of the live environment, while others believed that a well-executed recording could provide an adequate experience. When asked about the value of documentation as a whole, the respondent group cited a broad range of reasons for documentation. These reasons included business, public relations, and rehearsal needs—all themes which are under-represented in the literature on documentation, which tends to focus on documentation as historical proof or as a way to access the work as art. On the whole, while believing in the unique nature of performance as live and present, these performers expressed openness to learning about performance documentation and to making their performances accessible to future generations in an archival setting.

4.2 Case Study Results[68]

Mary Wegmann's original vision for her capstone project with FronteraFest was to test the idea of an archivist taking an active role in performance documentation, working closely with performers and actively creating documents that reflected both the process and the performance. She says:

> My initial goal for this project was to work with some of the performers in FronteraFest to think about documentation and how their current practices do or do not capture the process, performance,

[68] All quotations in this section are taken from an email to the author, dated February 4, 2012.

> and impact of their creative work. I then hoped to work closely with them to both implement some of their ideas for documentation as well as explore the type of relationship that evolved between me, as the archivist/documentarian, and the performers.

She intended to donate the material collected and created to the Austin History Center, an archives specializing in local Austin culture and history, and to create a set of guidelines for performers to follow in subsequent years on how to document their own work and donate their materials.

After preliminary discussion with a liaison at the Austin History Center and with the producer of FronteraFest, however, Wegmann said, "I realized that I should add an additional component to the project which was to assess the administrative records [of the festival] and create a records management/archives plan for FronteraFest." This was partly because the Austin History Center expressed interest in the administrative records of the festival, and partly because the producer had saved consistent bodies of administrative records since the beginning of the festival, and was pleased to find a good home for them. Wegmann's project broadened, then, from a limited project of documenting works of art to a project of documenting the festival as a whole and setting up a sustainable relationship between an archives and a performing arts community that encouraged continued administrative and artistic documentation.

In her discussions with the FronteraFest producer, Wegmann decided to focus her documentary efforts on four groups performing in the Short Fringe section

of the festival who were sponsored by the partnering organization Scriptworks. She hoped that working with four groups would allow her both to see a diversity of documentation needs and to be able to create rich and thorough documentation for each group.

Wegmann prepared for her project by reading some of the available literature on performing arts documentation and by talking to a variety of professionals, including the audio-visual archivist at the Austin History Center, to better understand the range of feasible approaches to the documentation needs of these groups. Then she began interviews with the artists. She says, "we thought together about the documents they currently create, their thoughts on creating documents [of] their work that wouldn't have been created naturally, and each of our roles in the process." After this, she was present at various rehearsals and for performances of the works she had documented.

Because part of her goal was to try out various ways of documenting, and to experiment with the archivist's role in each, Wegmann used a broad range of methods, but did not necessarily employ each one for each performance. At the end of the festival, she had collected recorded interviews with each of the playwrights, the application each submitted to Scriptworks, updated and revised scripts, films of early, mid-point, and technical rehearsals, films of performances, cue sheets, prompt sheets, still photos of rehearsals, and programs. Her goal was to reflect each performance in ways suited to it and given the time available, not necessarily to

have consistency across groups (making sure each group was represented by the same kind of documentation).

I asked Wegmann whether she thought of FronteraFest primarily as a historical event or primarily as works of art as she worked on her project. She replied that she realized through the process that it was not possible to for her to document either aspect as thoroughly as she might like. She said, "With … my own limitations in terms of time, skill (filming, interview skills, theater knowledge, community knowledge, etc.), limited resources (camera equipment), I kind of just went for it and I think I walked the line between thinking about/documenting the 'art work' and 'happening.'" This response highlights some of the problems an archivist is likely to encounter if she decides to take an active approach to documentation; the approach requires in-depth knowledge of the community to be documented, knowledge of the documentary form being created, and time. For Wegmann, thinking of the festival partly as a collection of artworks and partly as a historical event and collecting for both of these at a high level helped her to navigate this tension.

As she finished interacting with the performance groups, Wegmann shared some interesting reflections on the nature of her involvement. First, she noticed that her presence changed the nature of the event. She mentioned feeling like an ethnographer, with the same tensions between observation and participation in the events she documented that an ethnographer might feel toward her subject. When present at rehearsal, she might be asked her opinion on the performance itself, how

it looked and sounded, what could be improved. Second, her project caused the performance groups she worked with to begin to think more intentionally about the nature of their work and its place in Austin culture. Both of these ideas come out as she reflects on the value of the materials she collected, saying:

> I think that my presence in the process of these plays made the performers slightly more self conscious in an awkward way, but also in a way that introduced a little bit of self reflection and allowed them to see the value in documenting their work. And value in the work in general. …I think that this project and my interest/presence in their work gave the performers a chance to realize that their creative process is valuable and interesting.

The way Wegmann's involvement caused artists to reflect on their process and place may have been particularly noticeable in the fringe festival context, with the relatively small amount of publicity given to any particular performance in the festival and the brevity of the performances themselves. Her experience may also relate indirectly to the argument of Matthew Reason and others that the documentation of performance, by giving a particular performance the ability to be studied or experienced or remembered, gives that performance a broader cultural significance than it otherwise would have had.

In observing Wegmann's interactions and process throughout this project, I noticed that her lack of organizational affiliation both made the project more difficult in some ways and gave her more freedom in other ways. One area

where the lack of organizational affiliation stood out was in evaluation of what do document and what not to document. Wegmann's liaison at the Austin History Center, for instance, who is responsible for documenting Austin arts organizations, showed greater interest during their meetings in administrative records of FronteraFest than she did in documents of performance. This archivist wanted to document FronteraFest as a whole, fitting in to her larger mission to document the nature of the arts and culture scene in Austin. She was willing to accept documents of individual performances as well, but did not approach these documents from a curatorial mindset. Her mandate focused on the documentation of organizations and events, not on the preservation of artworks.

Without a mandate or mission statement to guide her, Wegmann was faced with a greater challenge to evaluate what should be recorded and preserved and what should not be. This lack of direction also gave her the freedom, however, to experiment with different kinds of records, to play with the boundaries of the archivist's role by acting, as she noted, sometimes as an ethnographer, sometimes as videographer, sometimes even as artistic advisor. Even her original focus—finding ways to preserve the artistic integrity of the works she documented—was not something that many professional archivists have the luxury to think about. Curators and conservators may consider those issues, but the institutional role of the archivist usually requires focus on event over focus on art.

Partly because of the difference between Wegmann's experimental project and the traditional archival appraisal process, she found herself operating in

ways her archival training had not prepared her for. First, she became closely involved in the community she was documenting. In doing this, she was in line with more contemporary conceptions of the archivist's role. Helen Samuels stresses the importance of dialogue between the archivist and the organization or community to be documented. Francesca Marini believes that close involvement is even more critical for the performing arts archivist, given the fragile nature of the events to be documented, and the rapid destructions and recreations that take place in the world of theatre. Although scholars and theorists encourage this connection, however, many real-world archival situations do not reflect this vision of close connection.

Another challenge was the odd hours required for Wegmann to actively document process and performance. Most rehearsals, as well as the performances, took place in the evenings. Wegmann needed the flexibility to work outside of institutional hours and to travel to various sites to interview and observe the artists. A third challenge for Wegmann was the skills her project required that were outside the scope of her archival training. She says that "the archivist would have to become proficient at conducting interviews/oral histories and filming, both still and moving images." In effect, to sustain an active role in documenting performance, the archivist would need to become proficient in the creation of whatever documentary form he or she chooses.

Wegmann's final observation about her experience was that her process of deciding which rehearsals to record, which photographs to take, and which textual records to request from each group put her into a curatorial role that she

was not prepared for. Even though she came into the project with the specific intention of experimenting with active documentation practices, she ultimately felt uncomfortable from an archivist's perspective with the authority to "cherry-pick" performances she thought of as interesting or valuable. She feared that such decisions, "intentional or not, exclude a lot of other creative works." In her opinion, the solution to the problem of archivist's involvement (the seeming choice between complete lack of documentation and a curatorial role that would typically be outside of the archivist's mission and mandate) lies in education and outreach. She felt that the long-term benefits of her project lay in the relationship she helped to forge between FronteraFest and the Austin History Center, and in increasing awareness in the performing arts community of documentation practices. Here, her conclusions resonate with the survey results discussed earlier. Most of the participants in the survey expressed interest in having a place to deposit their records as well as learning how best to document their own work.

Although she concluded that her level of involvement with the FronteraFest performances was unlikely to be sustainable or necessarily appropriate for an archivist, Wegmann's experiment gave her the unique opportunity to develop a set of best practices for performers who wish to document their own performances. Future FronteraFest performers, who would be best qualified to "curate" the representation of their own work, will benefit from her experience as they receive a handout listing possible ways of documenting both art and event and helping them to think through what might be most appropriate to

their own work. Wegmann's best practices document is available in Appendix C. At the end of the project, then, Wegmann came to believe that the most effective role for the performing arts archivist is to build and maintain dynamic relationships between archives and the performing arts communities, to create infrastructure for the creation and transfer of documentation, and to educate artists and arts organizations about how best to document themselves.

5. Conclusions

The question that I asked at the beginning of this study was: What is the archivist's role in the documentation of performing arts? I divided this question into problems of theory and problems of practice. On the theory side, the paradigms of archival appraisal seem to be in tension with paradigms from performance and theatre studies, setting historical fact and objectivity against concern for representing the "essence" of an artistic work. On the practice side, although there are many methods for documenting performing arts, the voice of the artists themselves (especially in semi-professional or amateur settings) has been quiet. A better understanding of the artist's perspective on documentation and their own practices was necessary to help the performing arts archivist better understand how to develop a robust program of documentation. In this section, I will return to both of these areas, theory and practice, with some final reflections informed by the literature and my own research.

5.1 Theoretical Concerns

It may seem that traditional archival values of objectivity and non-interference have been set up as straw men throughout this discussion. Although these values have proved to be less absolute than was believed at one time, without them the whole project of archiving crumbles, and memory becomes *repertoire* in Diane Taylor's sense—embodied action transferred from person to person with little or no fixed reference. For reasons we have considered, it is almost or perhaps completely impossible to create and maintain fixed and objective records, but

bodies of records that are as fixed and stable *as possible* do help us to access the past in useful ways. Both archives-memory and repertoire-memory are good and necessary to maintain strong, living traditions of performance.

In performing arts archives, objective proof of historical events must meet with subjective memory and partisan sub-creation. Both scholars and the culture at large benefit from being able to experience past performances, and yet any attempt to preserve performance as art becomes the creation of another, related work. Ultimately, either objectivity or art (or perhaps both) must be compromised to a certain extent in any one documentary form. One way to deal with this inevitable compromise is the inclusion of many documents relating to one performance in the archival record, Jess Allen suggests that responses to and perspectives on a particular performances can abound in the digital realm, creating the ideal opportunity to harvest a rich and inclusive documentary record, Paul Stapleton's appreciation of subjective, perspectived documents as perhaps most appropriate to the kind of research that performance and theatre scholars wish to do adds another layer to the dialogue about subjective and objective records.

The survey respondents demonstrated some new and helpful ways of thinking about the use of video in documentation. The intentional creation of recordings for the purpose of having a historical record runs into problems of perspective and the impossibility of accurate representation. Video recordings created for the present purposes of the performers, however, such as public relations or rehearsal reasons, avoid these dilemmas while still serving as historical

proof. Their creation for a present purpose makes them more classically archival, with appraisal done by the performers themselves, approaching Jenkinson's ideals for the creation and appraisal of archival records.

A final idea about resolving theoretical tensions comes from Mary Wegmann's observations about her work with FronteraFest. Her conclusion was that there is a great need for direct and dynamic connection between the archival community and the performing arts community. This kind of involvement possibly either stems from previous artistic involvement between the two or leads to it (as she discovered when she was asked to offer advice during rehearsals and to participate in artistic process). In the midst of this blended community, the archivist can take advantage of opportunities to help artists think reflectively about their place in the historically situated nature of their work and encourage them to create documents on their own. This approach is neither completely objective (as the archivist is drawn into the present work of the artists) nor completely subjective (because if the artists create and "curate" their own documentation, it is more accurately proof of them and their work than if an outsider creates and curates the documents).

5.2 Practical Concerns

Should we document? What do we document? How do we document? This study moved in the direction of answering the first question, showing that performers do, in fact, desire documentation of their work. For many different reasons, they do not want their work to disappear. A number of these artists

mirrored the concerns of theatre and performance scholars about the inability of documentation (specifically video recordings) to preserve the essence or "energy" of a performance, and yet almost all of them expressed interest in long-term preservation of documentation of their performances. The knowledge that performers are interested in relationships with archives should give archivists the confidence to move forward in establishing those relationships.

Wegmann's experience in the case study gave us a way of thinking about the second question: What do we document? She focused first on preserving performances and then broadened her focus to include administrative records. In other words, she began by documenting performance-as-art, and moved from there to documenting performance-as-event as well. This distinction may be a good place for archivists to start as they try to ensure they have adequately represented performance. In an ideal world, both aspects of performance would be represented; in a world of limited resources, however, this distinction might give archivists a way to think more clearly about their mission and focus.

The answers to the final question, how to document, flow naturally from any particular archivist's answer to the question of what to document. If the archivist decides to focus primarily on documenting performance as historical event, the methods for doing so are similar to the methods for documenting any other kind of event, following the conventions of archival appraisal. If the archivist wants to attempt to capture performance as a work of art, however, archival appraisal methods may not be adequate. Perhaps this distinction between

documenting performance as event and performance as art is another way of stating the tension between archival theory and performance and theatre theory. In any case, the choice to actively document performance as theatre means stepping outside of the traditional archivist's role. As Wegmann discovered, this choice is also likely to demand a different schedule and different skills than the archivist may already have.

If she attempts to document performance as art, the archivist can find herself in an unfamiliar position—creating documents, evaluating significance, and controlling the record to an extent she may not be comfortable with. Wegmann's experiment may have brought her up against the limits of the archivist's role in performance documentation. She also discovered an alternative, however, between complete involvement and document creation by the archivist on one hand and the complete loss of the artwork on the other. This alternative was the involvement of the archivist as advisor, providing education about possible types of documentation and the issues involved with documentation, perhaps even (in some settings) providing resources for documentation such as video equipment and cameras, but allowing the artists themselves to actually make the curatorial and creative appraisal decisions involved in the creation of the documents.

5.3 A Final Reflection

It is possible that archives always take on the identity of the material that is archived. Archives of administrative materials at a corporate archives often function as an extension of the administration. Literary collections become

literature, in which works of fiction blend with and bleed into the lives of those who wrote them. Personal papers serve as a visceral experience of a person, a substitute for him or her. In the same vein, as Auslander points out, it makes sense that an archive of performance is, or functions as, a performance. This means both that performance documentation allows access to some memory or version of past performance and that the documentation is, itself, a performance.

If it is true that archives take on the identity of the material in them, then the government archivist governs, maintaining and perpetuating government. The literary collector is an author of sorts, and the arranger of personal papers becomes a proxy for that person. The performing arts archivist, then, is herself an artist and a performer, reflecting both personal and cultural concerns in a publicly presented, evolving, constructed work. This idea should give us the confidence to move boldly into the documentation of performance. Whether experimenting with new roles and techniques or advising artists and connecting them with homes for their materials, the archivist herself constructs the archive in inevitably artistic and performative ways.

Appendix A. Survey of Performance Documentation Practices.

A Survey of Documentation Practices
for participants in the FronteraFest Fringe Festival

Survey Introduction and Cover Letter

Dear Research Participant,
We are asking for your help in a research project about practices of documentation of live performance. The research is important to help the performing arts and archiving communities better understand how to document and preserve performance art communities in Austin and beyond.
Your participation is requested in the following way:
1) Filling out an online survey about your own documentation practices. This expected to take no longer than 15 minutes. We request that you complete the survey before December 1.
Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary. You are not required to participate, and declining to participate in no way jeopardizes your standing with FronteraFest. Your responses on the survey or in the interview will not affect your standing with FronteraFest. All responses will be confidential. The website www.Kwiksurveys.com records some information from non-registered visitors, such as IP address, browser type, referring page, and time of visit. This is a common practice on the web. The researchers are not providing a promise that www.Kwiksurveys.com will not use this information. Cookies may also be used to remember visitor preferences. 3rd party vendors will be able to use cookie data stored on your computer. This is also a common practice on the web. The website www.Kwiksurveys.com does provide this guarantee concerning your responses to survey questions: "No data collected will be sold or otherwise used by KwikSurveys or any other 3rd party entity and/or individuals."
We hope that you will help us increase our knowledge in this field. If you have any questions about this project or the results please contact Meagan Samuelsen, Masters candidate at the School of Information, The University of Texas at Austin. [Personal Information Redacted]This study has been reviewed by The University of Texas at Austin Office of Research Support and the study number is 2011-07-0040. If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Office of Research Support by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Meagan Samuelsen
Primary Researcher

Masters Candidate at The School of Information
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Section 1 – Biographical Information

Please respond only if you are 18 years of age or older.

1) Are you at least 18 years of age?
   a) yes
   b) no.

2) What is the name of your performance in FronteraFest?

3) Is your performance in FronteraFest a solo performance, or are you part of a performance group?
a) Solo performance.
b) Performance group.

4) What is your primary role in the performance?
   a) On-stage performer.
   b) Director.
   c) Technical role (design or production).
   d) Other (please specify):

5) Have you ever participated in FronteraFest before?
   a) No, this is my first time in FronteraFest.
   b) Yes. (Please specify the year):

6) How often do you participate in the creation of performance in any capacity?
   a) This is my first time.
   b) I've been in one or two productions in the past.
   c) I participate in performance art occasionally, one to three productions a year.
   d) I participate in performance art regularly, four or more productions a year.

Section 2 – Current Documentation Practices

Please respond to Section Two only if you participate in the creation of performance art occasionally or regularly (at least once a year). Respond for all performances and productions that your and/or your performance group create, not only for performances involved in FronteraFest. If you do not perform regularly or occasionally, please skip to Section 3.

7) What kinds of documents do you (or does your group) keep after a performance is finished? Check all that apply:

-scripts
-playbills, tickets, and/or programs
-records of the design and concept-development process
-business records related to the production
-emails related to the production
-photographs of performers, costumes, and/or set pieces
-audiovisiual elements of the production (music, video installation, etc.)
-video of performances
-other (please specify)
-none of the above

8) If you keep any documents or records related to performances, what do you (or does your group) do with them? Check all that apply.

-Keep them in a box or a pile or in a computer file, without organizing them.
-Organize them for my own use or the use of the group.
-Make them available for public access.
-Put some of the documents relating to the production online.
-Donate them to an archive.
-Other (please specify).
-I'm not sure.

9) Are you interested in documenting your performances?

a) yes, I would prefer performances I am involved in to be well-documented.
b) no, I would rather not document the performances I am involved with
c) It doesn't matter to me either way.

10) If you answered a) yes in Question 9, what records would you like to be preserved? Check all that apply:

-scripts
-playbills, tickets, and/or programs
-records of the design and concept-development process
-business records related to the production
-emails related to the production
-photographs of performers, costumes, and/or set pieces
-audiovisiual elements of the production (music, video installation, etc.)
-video of performances
-other (please specify).

Section 3 – Theoretical Questions

11) Do you see value in documenting live performance? Please explain:

12) In your opinion, can a video adequately capture or preserve live performance? Please explain:

Section 4 – This year's FronteraFest performance

13) Do you plan to document your performance in FronteraFest this year?
a) yes
b) no

14) If you answered yes in Question 13, what material do you plan to save?
scripts
-playbills, tickets, and/or programs
-records of the design and concept-development process
-business records related to the production
-emails related to the production
-photographs of performers, costumes, and/or set pieces
-audiovisiual elements of the production (music, video installation, etc.)
-video of performances
-other (please specify)

15) If FronteraFest were to create a partnership with an archive in the Austin area in order to preserve documentation of festival performances, would you be interested in including your performance in the archive?
a) yes
b) no

16) Are you interested in knowing more about best practices in performing arts documentation?
a) yes
b) no

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix B. Table 1. Survey respondents with demographic information.

Response Number	Survey I.D.	Solo or Group	Role	Experience in FronteraFest	Frequency of participation in performance
1	07-34-51	Group.	Writer and director.	2000-2004, 2011.	One to three times a year.
2	07-34-37	Group.	Playwright, director, producer.	2008, 2011.	Four or more times a year.
3	07-34-24	Group.	Playwright, director.	First time.	Four or more times a year.
4	07-34-08	Solo.	Onstage performer.	2010.	One to three times a year.
5	07-33-38	Group.	Performer, director.	2006.	Four or more times a year.
6	07-33-26	Group.	Producer, director, performer.	First time.	Four or more times a year.
7	07-32-55	Solo.	Onstage performer.	2005-2011.	Four or more times a year.
8	07-32-42	Solo.	Onstage performer.	2006-2008, 2010-2011.	Four or more times a year.
9	07-32-16	Group.	Writer, director, performer.	First time.	One to three times a year.
10	07-31-38	Group.	Director.	2010.	One or two times in the past.
11	07-31-18	Solo.	Onstage performer.	2010.	One to three times a year.
12	07-31-03	Group.	Director.	2011.	One to three times a year.
13	07-30-47	Group.	Onstage performer.	2009-2011.	Four or more times a year.
14	07-30-30	Group.	Producer.	2009-2010.	Four or more times a year.

15	07-29-33	Solo.	Performer, director, and technical.	2010.	Four or more times a year.
16	07-29-02	Solo.	Playwright, director, producer.	First time.	One or two times in the past.
17	07-28-45	Solo.	Director.	2007-2008, 2010.	One to three times a year.
18	07-28-29	Group.	Onstage performer.	2009.	Four or more times a year.
19	07-28-14	Group.	Onstage performer.	2009-2010.	Four or more times a year.
20	07-28-00	Group.	Onstage performer.	1999-2011.	One to three times a year.
21	07-27-42	Solo.	Onstage performer.	2008, 2010.	Four or more times a year.
22	07-23-29	Group.	Writer, producer, performer.	First time.	Four or more times a year.
23	07-23-00	Group.	Director.	First time.	One or two times in the past.
24	07-22-43	Solo.	Onstage performer.	2000, 2009.	Four or more times a year.
25	07-22-25	Group.	Onstage performer.	No response.	Four or more times a year.
26	07-22-09	Group.	Producer.	2006-2011.	Four or more times a year.
27	07-21-50	Group.	Co-author, co-director, performer.	2007-2008.	One to three times a year.
28	07-21-28	Solo.	Onstage performer.	2011.	Four or more times a year.
29	07-21-11	Group.	Writer.	2007, 2010, 2011	Four or more times

					a year.
30	07-20-49	Group.	Director.	First time.	Four or more times a year.
31	07-20-35	Group.	Playwright.	First time.	One or two times in the past.
32	07-20-02	Group.	Creator, director, performer.	First time.	One to three times a year.
33	07-19-43	Group.	Onstage performer.	First time.	Four or more times a year.
34	07-19-27	Group.	Managing director.	Several (unspecified).	One or two times in the past.
35	07-19-10	Group.	Playwright, composer, lyrics.	2005-2009, 2011.	One or two times in the past.
36	07-18-54	Group.	Writer.	2003-2011.	Four or more times a year.
37	07-18-35	Solo.	Onstage performer.	First time.	Four or more times a year.
38	07-17-25	Group.	Director.	No response.	One to three times a year.

Appendix C. Guidelines for performance documentation best practices, written by Mary Wegmann for participants in the FronteraFest Fringe Festival in Austin, Texas.

FronteraFest Documentation Project

A partnership between FronteraFest and the Austin History Center

Do you want to be a part of the FronteraFest legacy?

Donate your records to the FronteraFest archive at the Austin History Center!

By saving and donating the scripts, notes, designs, and rehearsal and performance recordings from your show to the FronteraFest Archive at the Austin History Center (AHC) you are helping to preserve the history of FronteraFest and the theatre community in Austin! This document is designed to help you think about what materials you might be interested in donating to the FronteraFest archive and how to do it.

You might be asking yourself...

What types of records do I have?

Well, you might be creating more records during the process of putting on a show that you think! This list can be used as a starting point for you to think about the types of records you create at each stage of the performance. These records provide valuable and interesting insight into how your performance developed from start to finish.

In addition to the records you create naturally throughout the process, journals, interviews, and reflections from the cast are a good way to reflect on elements of the process and performance that would not otherwise be represented.

Another important aspect of your performance is the impact that it had in the community. Gathering reviews and articles in local newspapers and blogs to include in your archive of materials will provide an opportunity for others to see how your work was received.

But what does the AHC actually want?

The AHC is interested in any of the materials listed here, in addition to any other two- dimensional objects you create during the performance process.
Make sure to label your photographs and recordings thoroughly! Include the name of the performance, dates (including the year), names of people involved, and a short description.
Use the best quality recording equipment that you have access to.
If you have digital files burn them onto a CD or DVD.
Do not donate any duplicate items.

What will happen to my materials?

The AHC is a branch of the Austin Public Library system, located at 810 Guadalupe Street. The AHC collects books, photographs, maps, newspapers, and personal materials that document Austin's history. These materials are cared for by the AHC staff and are available for anyone to use within the History Center. By donating your materials to the AHC you transfer the ownership of the actual object but maintain intellectual control over the materials. People might want to use your records for any number of reasons: researching the arts in Austin, if they were involved in FronteraFest, or if they are interested in starting an arts festival.

Your records will help preserve the legacy of FronteraFest and Austin's theatre community!

If you are interested in donating your materials, please contact FronteraFest producer, Christi Moore, about submission details. Any of the items below are eligible to be included in the archive:

Pre-Performance

- ✓ FronteraFest application materials
- ✓ Research notes
- ✓ Script and drafts
- ✓ Journal/reflections

Rehearsal

- ✓ Casting information
- ✓ Rehearsal Schedule
- ✓ Budgets
- ✓ Stage Manager's notebook
- ✓ Revised scripts
- ✓ Photographs
- ✓ Lighting, costume, and set designs
- ✓ Prop list
- ✓ Recordings of rehearsals
- ✓ Recording of tech rehearsals
- ✓ Journal/reflections

Performance

- ✓ Posters
- ✓ Press Release
- ✓ Programs
- ✓ Soundtrack
- ✓ Recording of the performance

Post-Performance

- ✓ Interviews with people involved
- ✓ Articles/Reviews
- ✓ Journal/Reflections

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